# CHARACTER CAMEOS FROM THE BIBLE

## Sermons on Bible Personalities

*By*

**JOHN WADDEY**

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# DEDICATION

To the young people of the Karns Church of Christ with whom I have worked these ten years, whose classes I have taught, and with whom I have spent many happy weeks in Christian camp. They have readily listened and learned as we studied these lessons from God's great people of the past.

# OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

*Searching the Scriptures.* 2nd Edition (cloth)

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*A Child of the King and Other Sermon Outlines.*

*Preaching To Preachers About Preaching.*

*Liberalism. The Deadly Enemy of the Church.*

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Waddey was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1938. He was baptized by George Prosser in 1955. Parker French encouraged him to become a preacher. One year after his conversion, he preached his first sermon at the Blackmon congregation near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He is married to the former Reba Duncan and is the father of three daughters, Lourene, Lesia and Rebecca.

His schooling was received at the College of Evangelists and Itawamba Junior College. Most of his education was gained from his own study and experience. In his twenty years of preaching, Brother Waddey has served churches in Mississippi, Colorado and Tennessee. Evangelistic work has carried him into fifteen other states. He has made nine overseas trips, visiting mission works in eighteen countries. He has done evangelistic work in eleven foreign nations. Over the years he has spoken at a number of special lectureships at Christian Colleges, Schools of Preaching and congregations.

Since 1968, John Waddey has worked with the Karns congregation of Knoxville, Tennessee. Annually that church hosts a World Mission Workshop. He has planned and directed that program since moving to Karns.

Each year the author conducts several revival meetings. He is an officer of the Teenage Christian Camp. He has engaged in four public debates and a number of radio and television talkshows where controversial subjects were discussed.

For eleven years Brother Waddey conducted a weekly radio broadcast. For several years he wrote a weekly newspaper column. Through the Rocky Mountain News of Denver, Colorado, over 50 million copies of his lessons were circulated. His articles are carried in the Firm Foundation, Gospel Advocate, Words of Truth, Christian Echo, and other brotherhood papers.

In 1970 he assisted the Karns elders in establishing the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions and continues to serve as a teacher in it.

In addition to his evangelistic duties, our subject is president of the Tennessee Volunteers for Life, a pro-life group fighting the abortion evil. He is also a member of the board of directors of the National Right to Life Committee. He writes and speaks extensively on the related issues of Abortion, Euthanasia and Suicide.

This is the eleventh book from John Waddey's pen. For previous titles see the list of the author's other works.

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# INTRODUCTION

"By their fruits ye shall know them." This statement by our Lord can certainly apply to the author of this book.

There are at least two requisites to a great lesson or series of lessons: 1) A great theme; 2) A great preacher.

1) There is no greater theme than that of studying the lives of great Bible characters such as Jesus, the Son of God, and those found in both the Old and New Testaments. It is through the study of characters that we learn the full meaning of our purpose and existence on this side of eternity.

2) The author is a God-fearing minister, an earnest student of the Bible and a devoted Christian. He is one of the soundest contenders for the "faith" that we have among us today. Wherever he has gone he seeks to "do all the good he can" in preaching and sharing the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ.

John Waddey was born on July 10, 1938 in Nashville, Tennessee. He is presently with the Karns congregation in Knoxville, Tennessee and has served that congregation well as a minister, counselor and teacher. He is married to the former Reba Duncan. They have three daughters, Lourene, Lesia and Becky.

It is both a privilege and a pleasure for me to commend this work. I hope that many of our preachers, especially our younger preachers, will study and preach these lessons thoroughly. They and the cause of Christ will prosper by doing so.

M. J. Mitchell
Woodson Chapel Church of Christ
Nashville, Tennessee

# AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The studies contained in this book were prepared and delivered to the Karns congregation throughout the year of 1976. The author usually averaged one biographical sermon each week that he spoke. Either morning or evening services were used to deliver them. The choice depended on the nature of the particular lesson and the specific needs of that service. The reception given these lessons by the congregation was truly wonderful. This added much to the joy of preparing and delivering them.

Biographical preaching offers a unique and versatile approach to preaching in the local congregation. After one has served a church for several years, how does he preach on the same essential themes that need to be taught repeatedly without becoming repetitious and boring. How do you keep your approach to salvation or baptism fresh after you have already preached ten sermons on these subjects?

Of course, there are numerous answers and approaches. Two that have been used by the present writer are: a wide range of reading and the use of biographical lessons. If one wishes to preach on baptism for the eighth time, why not preach on the man from Ethiopia? He was baptized. This is one of your major points in the lesson. If you want to preach on the errors of modern divine healing, how about the lame man at the Beautiful Gate? Have you a problem brother in the congregation? Would a lesson on Diotrephes fit his need?

One problem to be faced is to find a good source of biographical materials that are homiletically arranged. For several years this scribe has been collecting such books and lessons. Commonly three to six sources are studied before his own outline is sketched. To be interesting, such lessons need to move swiftly. Getting bogged down on any one point is usually fatal. Most of the lessons herein were delivered in 30-40 minute presentations.

This is really a variety of expository preaching. All agree that both the speaker and his audience grow most on the expository diet. Too, when we get thoroughly acquainted with the people of the Bible, we are better able to comprehend the messages God sent to them. In addition, we see ourselves reflected in their lives, their struggles, failures and victories. Such study aids us in improving our lot.

It is the author's prayer that many will be benefitted from these lessons. Hopefully multitudes of fellow preachers will find them useful in their work. The greatest joy of all will be to meet the great saints of the Holy Record in glory and there introduce to them precious souls that were won through their faithful example and be privileged to ask of them all those other questions which we wondered about as we read of their noble lives.

This volume follows an earlier one, *Sermons on Saints and Sinners*. If the Lord so wills, yet another will follow.
March 2, 1977

# THE PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

This is one of the many books we have published by John Waddey. It was originally printed in Singapore in 1977 as a companion volume of SERMONS ON SAINTS AND SINNERS, and we are happy now to be able finally to bring out this edition here in the States.

Dozens of characters are introduced to us throughout the Bible. Many wonderful personalities are to be found in both the Old and New Testaments and, likewise, any number of ungodly people are listed there. Enough information is given about both the good and the bad to give us many valuable lessons.

This material appears in outline form and therefore may be used as sermons and in classroom situations. With proper study and presentation, these characters can be brought to life. When a scriptural and spiritual application is made, the result can be the molding of lives today into the likeness of Christ.

I personally want to commend this work to you, with the prayer that it will bring many rich blessings into your life.

J.C. Choate
Winona, Mississippi
August 21, 1981

# LEARNING
# FROM
# BIBLE
# BIOGRAPHIES

# LEARNING FROM BIBLE BIOGRAPHIES

The inspired writers tell us of 2,930 different men and women. They provide for us a vast number of lessons both of what to do and what to avoid. These personalities offer a rich vein of study for young and old. A preacher will find no more successful series of lessons than these. Longfellow said, "Lives of great men bring to our remembrance the possibilities of our own lives."

In studying these personalities, there are some helpful suggestions that will aid us in our research. We condense these from Wilbur Smith's *Profitable Bible Study*, pp. 44-46.

I. Collect all the material which the Bible contains concerning the one character to be studied. Be sure that you are not confusing two or more persons of the same name.

II. Carefully study the ancestry of each person noting the characteristics of his parents, if known.

III. Attempt to estimate the advantages in training which the subject received in his youth.

IV. Carefully determine the work which your character accomplished in life.

V. Was there a great crisis in this person's life? If so, how did he meet it?

VI. What are his character traits?

VII. Were there friendships that helped or hindered this person?

VIII. What influence did this individual have upon his contemporaries? Does that influence still affect the world?

IX. Trace his growth of character.

X. Notice his religious experience, i.e., his prayer life, his faith and service to God, his worship, his knowledge of the Scriptures.

XI. What were his faults and shortcomings?

XII. Was there one great sin in his life? What effect did it have on his work, and his life?

XIII. What kind of family did he leave behind him? How were they influenced by him?

XIV. Was this person a type of Christ? How?

XV. What is the one great lesson in this person's life for me?

In addition to the above study principles, there are some important rules of interpretation that must be remembered if we expect to draw the correct lessons from the study of these great and not so great people. The following are from Bernard Ramm's *Protestant Biblical Interpretation.*

A. We must make a distinction between what the Bible records and what it approves. Men frequently make the mistake of assuming that whatever is written in the Bible is thereby approved. The fact of divine inspiration does not mean that all which is in the Bible is the will of God. Inspiration here extends only to fidelity of recording.

B. We may take direct application from all of those incidents that the Bible directly censures or approves.

C. Express commands to individuals are not the will of God for us generally. It behooves us to be unusually careful that we do not try to apply uncritically the commands given to good men of the Bible.

D. In the lives of men in the Scriptures, determine what the outstanding spiritual principle is. Hebrews 11 is a remarkable example of going through the Old Testament and isolating a great spiritual virtue for our benefit.

E. In the application of examples to our lives we do not need a literal reproduction of the Biblical situation. Baptism need not be performed in the Jordan nor the Lord's Supper in an upper room to be scripturally done.

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope," Rom. 15:4. May we diligently study those saints and sinners of the Sacred Record that we might learn their virtue and abhor their sins. Let us follow after those who followed Christ, I Cor. 11:1.

## AARON THE ORATOR

### Ex. 4:10-16

INTRO: The world has always admired the silver tongued orator. It generally takes for granted the back-up man, the helper and assistant. Our subject was a great orator, but today he is largely obscured in the shadow of his great brother Moses.

**I. About the Man.**

A. His birth

1. His parents; Amram and Jochebed of the tribe of Levi.

        - a. Ex. 6:20.
    - 2. Born in servitude in Egypt.
    - 3. He was the second of three children.
        - a. Miriam and Moses.
        - b. He was three years older than Moses, Ex. 7:7.
- B. His name possibly means "bright and shining."
- C. His family.
    - 1. His wife, Elisheba.
    - 2. His sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.
        - a. Ex. 6:23.
- D. His character.
    - 1. A good man, devout and religious.
    - 2. A great supporter and helper of his brother, Moses.
    - 3. Very weak and easily led when away from Moses.
    - 4. He must have been penitent for his many failures since God let him continue to serve and honored his name.
        - a. Ps. 106:16.
- E. His work.
    - 1. His first 83 years were spent as a slave in Egypt.
    - 2. He, with Moses, effected the release of the Hebrew Nation from Egyptian domination.
    - 3. For 40 years he served as high-priest of God's nation.
        - a. Founding high-priest.

    - b. Helped to organize and implement a religious system that stood intact 1500 years and survives to this day.

- F. His death.
  1. He died in his 123rd year, it was about 1400 B.C.
  2. Place of death, Mt. Hor, south of Canaan.
     - a. Num. 33:38.
  3. The nation mourned him 30 days.

**II. His Failures.**

- A. The incident of the golden calf, Ex. 32: 1ff.
  1. When Moses went up onto Sinai, he left Aaron and Hur in charge, Ex. 24: 13-14.
  2. When Moses was gone forty days, the people grew restless and apprehensive.
  3. They gathered together and demanded that Aaron make them a god to lead them, Ex. 32: 1.
  4. Aaron quickly capitulated and called for gold with which to make an image, Ex. 32: 2.
  5. He fashioned a golden calf like they had known in Egypt.
  6. Aaron made a feeble effort to maintain Jehovah worship, but it turned into a heathen orgy, Ex. 32: 5-6.
  7. When confronted by the angry Moses, he blamed the people, excusing himself.
     - a. He pretended that the molten image just happened to result when he cast the gold into the fire, Ex. 32: 21-24.

8. "Aaron had let them loose," and they had become a derision to their enemies, Ex. 32: 5.
9. Only the intercession of Moses spared Aaron and the whole nation from God's wrath, Ex. 32: 10, 30-32.

B. The Episode over the Cushite Woman, Num. 12: 1-15.

1. Miriam and Aaron complained about Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman.
2. Their real complaint was that Moses was given the major role of leadership in the new nation. Num. 12: 2-8.
3. For their act of jealousy, Miriam was smitten with leprosy, Num. 12: 9-10.
4. Aaron confessed their sin, Num. 12: 11.
5. From the context, it seems he allowed Miriam to lead him into this complication.

C. The Episode at Meribah, Num. 20: 2-13.

1. They were near the end of their 40 years of wandering.
2. The people grew panicky about a shortage of water.
3. They vented their frustration upon Moses and Aaron.
4. Being provoked and angered at the people, they disobeyed God's instructions and took the glory to themselves, Num. 20: 10-11.
5. This cost them their privilege of entering Canaan, Num. 20: 12.

## III. The Contributions Aaron Made.

(Although Aaron had his weaknesses, we must not overlook his virtues.)

A. He supplemented Moses' weakness with his skills of oratory, Ex. 4: 14-16.

B. He stood side by side with Moses facing the hostile Pharoah, wielding the rod of judgment, Ex. 7: 10-13.

C. He with Hur held up Moses' hands in the day of battle against the Amalekites, Ex. 17: 8-13.

D. He assisted Moses in leadership, Ex. 24: 14.

E. He stood with Moses against the rebellious Israelites, Num. 16: 3.

F. He provided leadership for the religious life of the nation, while Moses led them in civil matters, Ex. 28: 1.

## IV. Lessons to Remember.

A. Think of the holy pride of Amram and Jochebed in their three illustrious children, Miriam, Aaron and Moses.

B. We see the importance of the role and work of the loyal assistant. Moses could not have succeeded without Aaron's help.

C. We see that oratorical powers alone cannot help a man to stand in the face of great temptations or fierce opposition.

D. High office does not protect a man from the failures of weak character.

E. Let us pray that God will make us strong to resist temptation.

F. How often Aaron's mind must have remembered with shame the awful failures of the past as he sought to lead the people in God's ways.

G. The awareness of his own weakness and sin enabled Aaron to be an understanding and sympathetic high-priest, Heb. 2: 17-18.

H. We should not judge Aaron's weakness too harshly.

  1. His years in slavery would have contributed to his weakness. For 83 years he had not had to think or act for himself.
  2. "The sinews of a man's spirit are strengthened by the responsibility of freedom; they wither amid the inactivity of bondage." H. Hobbs.

I. In spite of Aaron's weakness and failure, God was able to use him to heaven's glory. His grace provided what Aaron lacked.

J. Likewise God can use us despite our imperfections, II Cor. 12: 9.

K. We have a high-priest far superior to Aaron, Jesus the Son of God, Heb. 7: 11-28.

## AHITHOPHEL

### A Friend Who Became a Foe

### II Sam. 16:23

INTRO: Great nations are the products of great rulers. Great rulers always surround themselves with wise counsellors and advisors. The key to David's great reign was the brilliant array of helpers that he brought into his court. One of the most notable of these was a man named Ahithophel.

## I. About the Man:

- A. His home was in Giloh, a town of southwest Judah, II Sam. 15: 12.
- B. He was the father of Eliam, his only son, who served as a member of David's elite corp of soldiers called "the thirty."
- C. He was renowned for his sage wisdom in governmental matters.
    1. His recommendations were "as the oracle of God." II Sam. 16: 23.
- D. He was of great influence and reputation because of his genius and station.
- E. He occupied a chief cabinet office in the administration of David.
    1. Absalom also recognized his worth.
- F. He was an unprincipled man.
    1. He was fickle in his loyalty.
    2. He was a turncoat.
    3. He was a man of craft rather than character.
    4. He chose expediency rather than right.

## II. The Occasion of Ahithophel's Defection.

- A. David's son Absalom conspired to bring about a coup de etat to wrest the throne of Israel from his father.
    1. II Sam. 15: 7-12.
- B. The situation was so grave that David fled from Jerusalem with his palace guard, closest aids and servants, II Sam. 15: 13-18.
    1. They feared Absalom would kill them.

    2. David went weeping, with his head covered and his feet bare because of the humiliation and shame of the event.

- C. David was told that Ahithophel, his chief advisor, had defected to Absalom and the rebels, II Sam. 15:31.
    1. This news alarmed David.
        - a. Alone, Absalom would likely fail.
        - b. With Ahithophel, he would probably win.
    2. He immediately prayed for Divine help to nullify the influence of this shrewd mind, II Sam. 15:31.
- D. David's strategy to offset Ahithophel.
    1. Send Hushai the Archite, another trusted advisor, back to Absalom for the express purpose of confounding the schemes of Ahithophel, II Sam. 15:32-34.

## III. Ahithophel's Fall and Demise.

- A. His first disgusting advice.
    1. "Go in unto your father's concubines," II Sam. 16:21.
    2. This would be an assertion of his claim on the throne, as a new king inherited his predecessor's wives.
    3. It would so alienate David and Absalom that no reconciliation would ever be possible, II Sam. 16:21b.
    4. It was in direct violation of God's law, Lev. 18:6-8.
    5. This Absalom did in the sight of all, II Sam. 16:22.

B. His second recommendation.

   1. Allow Ahithophel to take 12,000 choice soldiers and pursue and kill David immediately, II Sam. 17: 1-4.
   2. All of the other loyalists would be spared.

C. Absalom sought the advice of Hushai also in this matter.

   1. Hushai discredited the plan of Absalom as unsound.
      a. Really, Ahithophel's plan would have worked immensely well to Absalom's advantage.
   2. He recommended a grandiose plan whereby the young pretender would personally lead all his troops into the field to engage all of David's followers, II Sam. 17: 11-12.
      a. This meant taking time to recruit soldiers from throughout the land.
      b. That would give David time to flee to safety, II Sam. 17: 16.
   3. Absalom and all his aids were deceived into buying this very poor advice, II Sam. 17: 14.
   4. "Jehovah had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that Jehovah might bring evil upon Absalom." II Sam. 17: 14.

D. Ahithophel hanged himself, II Sam. 17:23.

   1. He saw the disaster that Absalom was falling into.
   2. He no doubt feared the reprisal of David, whom he had betrayed.

        3. His pride may have been wounded that his advice had been spurned.
    E. A little known extenuating circumstance.
        1. Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bathsheba whom David stole from Uriah the Hittite, II Sam. 11:3; 23:34.
            a. David then had Uriah killed.
        2. It is very likely that this sordid affair played a large role in Ahithophel's defection from David.
        3. In this light, it is seen as an act of "sweet revenge."

**IV. David's Response to Ahithophel's Defection as seen in the Psalms written about this occasion.**

    A. Ps. 55:1-15.
        1. We see the intimate closeness of their former relation.
        2. "Mine equal, my companion, my familiar friend. . ."
    B. Ps. 41:9.
    C. These same verses are typical of Judas betrayal of Christ.

**V. Lessons to Remember:**

    A. We cannot abuse our friends and sin against them and expect them to be loyal to us.
    B. Men may plan their coups, but the Most High still rules in the kingdom of men, Dan. 4:25.
    C. We see how God's providence protected the king of His choosing.

D. We see David reaping the sin he had sown, Gal. 6:7.

E. We see a foolish young rebel destroying everything sacred and holy in his family, himself included.

F. We are revulsed by the defection and treachery of a trusted friend and advisor like Ahithophel.

G. We learn that worldly wisdom alone cannot guarantee a happy, successful life.

H. We see the senselessness and sinfulness of suicide. It is self-murder, Rom. 13:9.

## ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

### Partners in Sin

### Acts 5:1-16

INTRO: Satan never grants the church rest unless he has it under his power. Even when the apostles were yet on earth he sought to subvert, corrupt and destroy. A notable case is that of Ananias and Sapphira.

**I. About the Subjects:**

A. Members of the Jerusalem congregation.
   1. This tells us they had heard and obeyed the gospel just as we have done.
   2. They were "church going" people.
   3. They enjoyed the respectability of being disciples.

B. They heard some of the greatest gospel preaching on a regular basis.

C. They had witnessed the miracles wrought through the apostles by the Holy Spirit.

D. They were wealthy for only the wealthy had land to sell.

E. Names: Ananias (Hannaniah), to whom Jehovah has been gracious . Sapphira, beautiful, a sapphire.

## II. The Background of their Sin.

A. In their zeal and dedication, many of the saints actually sold their property and gave the proceeds to the Lord for the needs of the poor.

   1. Acts 4: 32-36.

B. No doubt praise and commendations were given to these generous spirits. See the example of Barnabas.

C. It seems that Ananias and Sapphira desired that praise of the people.

## III. Their Awful Sin and Judgment. The deed was the combination of a number of sins which formed a rope which hanged them.

A. Deceit in the plotting and before Peter.

B. Hypocrisy, pretending to be what they were not.

C. False pride, in desiring the praise of men.

D. Avarice, an unhealthy desire for and attachment to money.

E. A low view of God, thinking they could get by with such a trick.

F. Sacrilege, lying in an act of religious worship.

G. Lying to the Holy Spirit.

H. Evil (in the form of the original temptation) had not been resisted.

## IV. Why Did God Punish Them So Severely?

A. They deserved it. It was justice, Rom. 6:23.

B. It was necessary to save the church from inward damage, I Cor. 5:6.

C. It was necessary to counteract the effects of the lie on the world without.

## V. The Effects of the Judgment, Acts 5:11-16.

A. Fear came upon the whole church making each member more keenly aware of the need for honesty, truthfulness, sincerity, and the need for shunning hyprocrisy and deceitfulness.

B. A sifting effect upon would-be professors, deterring the insincere and unconverted.

C. Multitudes were added to the church.

D. It was like the sunshine after the rain.

## VI. Why Did God Preserve this Unpleasant Story?

A. It is a true event in the history of the church.

B. It is necessary to a correct, balanced picture of the early church.

C. It forever sounds a needed warning against the sins of greed, hypocrisy and lying.

D. The complete story presents a ray of hope. Churches can survive problems.

E. It reminds us of the need for discipline in the church to deal with disorderly brothers and sisters.

## VII. Lessons to Remember:

A. "Lying lips are an abomination to Jehovah, but they that deal truly are His delight." Prov. 12:22.

B. "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows," I Tim. 6: 10.

C. John 12: 42-43.

D. They were not compelled to give it all to God, but they were compelled to tell the truth.

E. Nothing so shakes the confidence of friends as a lie found out.

F. Nothing so shatters one's own self-confidence as lying, whether one is caught or not.

G. One cannot trifle with truth and escape unpunished, Num. 32: 23.

H. Helpers in sin must be sharers in its judgment.

## THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH

### Ex. 3:1-8, 13-15

INTRO: One of the most fascinating and interesting personalities of the entire Bible is introduced in our text. Perhaps no other Bible character is so little known or understood as he. Who is the angel of Jehovah? That will be the object of our study.

**I. Characteristics of angels.**

A. They are created beings. Col. 1: 16-17.

B. Being creatures, they are not divine.

1. Not omnipotent.
2. Not omniscient.
3. Not omnipresent.

C. They are holy, but are capable of sinning. II Pet. 2: 4.

D. They are messengers of God.
   1. This is the definition of "angel."

E. Man is forbidden to worship angels.
   1. Rev. 22:8-9.
   2. Only God may be worshipped.

## II. The Recorded Appearances of the Angel of Jehovah.

A. In Genesis.
   1. Gen. 16:7-14, to Hagar.
      a. He promised her rich blessings.
      b. "She called the name of Jehovah that spake unto her, 'Thou art a God that seeth.' . . ." Gen. 16:13.
   2. Gen. 18:1-2, to Abraham at Mamre.
      a. He promised them Isaac. Gen. 18:10.
      b. He claimed that nothing was too hard for him (Jehovah). 18:14.
      c. He is judge of all the earth. Gen. 18:25-26.
      d. He rained fire and brimstone on Sodom. Gen. 18:20-21; 19:24.
   3. Gen. 22:9-18, when Abraham offered Isaac.
      a. The angel stayed his hand, 22:11-12.
      b. He provided the sacrificial ram, 22:13.
      c. Abraham called the place Jehovah-jireh (Jehovah will provide).
      d. The angel renewed the covenant promise of Messiah, 22:15-16.
   4. Gen. 28:10-17, Jacob's dream at Bethel.

    - a. Gen. 31: 11-13, the angel of Jehovah is the God of Bethel.
  - 5. Gen. 32: 24-31.
    - a. There wrestled a man with Jacob, 32: 24.
    - b. Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." 32: 30.
    - c. Hos. 12: 3-5, Hosea says this was "the angel."
  - 6. Gen. 48: 15-16, aged Jacob called upon God the angel to bless his descendents.
- B. In Exodus:
  - 1. Ex. 3: 1-8, 13-15, to Moses at the burning bush.
    - a. The angel of Jehovah appeared in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush....
    - b. "Jehovah saw" that Moses turned aside to see, 3: 4.
    - c. "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush...." 3: 4.
    - d. Moses took off his shoes for he was standing upon holy ground, 3: 15.
    - e. "God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM," 2: 14.
  - 2. Ex. 14: 19-20, the pillar of cloud and fire of the Exodus.
    - a. This was Jehovah. Ex. 13: 21-22.
    - b. Num. 20: 16.
  - 3. Ex. 23: 20-23.
    - a. The Hebrews had to obey this angel.
    - b. He could pardon their transgressions.

4. Ex. 33: 1-3, 12-16, at the episode of the golden calf.
    a. God withdrew the angel of Jehovah.
    b. He gave them some other angel.
    c. This frightened and distressed Moses and the people.
    d. God, upon their repentance, promised "his presence" to go with them, 33: 14.
    e. Isaiah says it was the angel of his presence, Is. 63: 9.
        1. Presence means appearance of face.

C. In Joshua.
  1. Josh. 5: 13-6: 2.
  2. A man with drawn sword appeared to Joshua.
  3. He was prince of the host of Jehovah (armies).
  4. Joshua worshipped him. 5: 14.
  5. He had Joshua remove his shoes for the place was holy. 5: 15.
  6. It was Jehovah speaking to Joshua. 6: 2.

D. In Judges.
  1. Judges 2: 1-5, the angel of Jehovah corrected the nation at Bochim.
  2. Jud. 6: 11-14, to Gideon.
      a. The angel of Jehovah appeared to him and blest him.
      b. Jehovah commissioned him to save Israel from Midian.
  3. Jud. 13: 2-20, to Manoah and his wife, Samson's parents.
      a. The angel of Jehovah appeared, 13: 3.

    b. He promised them a son.
    c. He refused their food to eat, 13:16.
    d. They did not recognize who he was, 13:16.
    e. He insisted that they offer it as a sacrifice to Jehovah, 13:16.
    f. His name was "wonderful," 13:18.
    g. He ascended in the flame of their sacrifice, 13:20.

E. In II Kings.
  1. II Kings 19:33-36.
  2. Jehovah promised to save Hezekiah and Judah from the armies of Sennacherib, king of Assyria.
  3. The angel of Jehovah destroyed the army.

F. In I Chronicles 21:9-30.
  1. David sinned in ordering a military census.
  2. God sent a pestilence upon the nation by his angel, 21:14-15.
  3. David saw the angel of Jehovah with his sword drawn, 21:16.
  4. David fell on his face before the angel and prayed, 21:16-17.

G. In Daniel.
  1. Dan. 10:5-14.
  2. His appearance was majestic.
  3. Daniel felt totally undone in his august presence.
  4. He came to reveal the future of the nation to Daniel, 10:12-14.

## III. Facts About The Angel of Jehovah.

- A. He is worshipped, Josh. 5: 14.
  - 1. But we are forbidden to worship an ordinary angel, Rev. 22: 8-9.
- B. He is called God and Jehovah. Ex. 3: 4.
- C. He claims God's power and authority.
  - 1. He forgives sins. Ex. 23: 21.
    - a. Mk. 2: 5-10.
  - 2. He revealed the future. Dan. 9: 14.

## IV. Who Then is This Angel of Jehovah?

- A. Not a created being.
  - 1. Not a man . . . though he appeared as a man.
  - 2. Not merely a normal angel.
- B. Not God the Father.
  - 1. No man hath seen God at any time. John 1: 18.
  - 2. The angel told Manoah to worship another than himself, Judges 13: 15.
- C. He was the Word of God, the pre-incarnate Christ.
  - 1. The angel of Jehovah said his name was "I Am". Ex. 3: 1-6, 13-14.
    - a. Jesus said he is the "I Am." John 8: 58.
  - 2. The angel of Jehovah led Israel through the wilderness and provided their needs.
    - a. Paul said the rock they drank of was Christ, I Cor. 10: 2-4.
    - b. Moses reports that it was Jehovah. Ex. 17: 5-6.
  - 3. In Joshua, the angel is the prince of the hosts (armies) of Jehovah. Jos. 5: 14.

    a. Rev. 19: 11-16 pictures Jesus as head of heaven's armies.

4. To Manoah the angel said his name is "wonderful". Judges 13: 16-18.
    a. Isaiah predicted that Messiah's name would be "wonderful". 9: 6.
5. Isaiah calls him the angel of God's face, 63: 9.
    a. Heb. 1: 3 says Christ is "the very image of his (God's) substance."
6. Jacob saw a ladder from earth to heaven and Jehovah ("beside it", ft. note). Gen. 28: 13.
    a. Jesus says he is that ladder. John 1: 51.
7. The angel of Jehovah can be worshipped. Jos. 5: 14.
    a. No mere man or angel can be worshipped. Acts 10: 25, 26; Rev. 22: 8-9.
    b. Jesus can be worshipped. Matt. 28: 17.
8. The angel is called Jehovah. Ex. 3: 1-4.
    a. But Jesus is also called Jehovah.
        1) Is. 43: 11, There is no saviour but Jehovah.
        2) Tit. 2: 13, But Jesus is saviour.
        3) Therefore Jesus is Jehovah.
9. Daniel saw the angel in his regal glory. Dan. 10: 5-6.
    a. John saw the glorified Christ in like glory, Rev. 1: 12-15.

D. The appearances of the angel of Jehovah were theophanies:

1. "When God assumes the form of an angel

or a man in order to speak and act visibly and audibly to men, to provide them some revelation or guidance."

2. These verses demonstrate the existence our Lord had from eternity as the Word of God. John 1: 1-3.
3. They tell us of his activities for the redeemed's sake during those long years before he came as Jesus the son of Mary to live among us.

CONCLUSION:

Let us all honor and adore the Mighty Angel of Jehovah who is our Lord Jesus Christ.

## DEMAS, the DESERTER

### II Tim. 4:9-11

INTRO: Among those people whose names are immortalized on the Sacred Pages is a young man named Demas. His name lives in ignomy because he deserted the aged Paul in his hour of need.

**I. About the man.**

A. All we know of him is found in three passages, this, Col. 4: 14, Philemon 24.

B. He is called Paul's fellow-worker.

C. He was a younger preacher who had travelled and worked with the aged apostle.

D. He had followed Paul to Rome.

E. He left Paul and went to Thessalonica, deserting him in his most trying hour.

## II. His offence:

A. He forsook Paul in prison when he was desperately needed.

   1. What a contrast we see between Paul and Demas.

      a. Paul, ready to seal his testimony with his blood.

      b. Demas, deserting his post of duty for the love of the world.

B. He also forsook Cause of Christ and the Saviour.

   1. I John 2: 15. The love of the world and God are mutually exclusive.

C. Demas was not Paul's first disappointment, II Tim. 4: 16.

   1. Luke was dependable always, like the morning sun. II Tim. 4: 11.

## III. Why did he Desert? What Motivated Him?

A. Perhaps he started out to follow Christ without counting the cost, Lk. 14: 27-33.

B. When a man undertakes to follow Christ, the first essential is to know what he is doing.

C. He may have been swept into the church in a moment of excitement, without thinking things through. Then came unpopularity, persecution, sacrifice, loneliness, the danger of imprisonment, even death. He may not have bargained for this.

D. He may have suffered from the inevitable weariness of the years.

   1. Time has a way of wearing our ideals away.

   2. There is no threat so dangerous and insidious to one's ideals as the passing of time.

    3. That threat can only be overcome by living constantly in the thrill of the presence of Jesus, *Barclay*.

- E. He loved this present world.
    1. This does not have to mean a life of vice and corruption.
    2. It could be a love of ease and comfort.
    3. A love of worldly honor, Gal. 1:10, John 12:42-43.
    4. A love of wealth, Matt. 13:22.
    5. A love of kinfolks and home, Matt. 10:37-38.
    6. Even a love of life in the face of martyrdom, Mk. 8:35-36.
    7. A love of sinful pleasure, I John 2:15.
- F. Some think it was the persecution and danger.
    1. Man does not give way because of external pressure alone, something weakens on the inside.
    2. Nothing can happen to the soul until it consents.
    3. The heart's door opens only from the inside.

**IV. He Fell Away After Enduring Much Hardship and Preaching to Many.**

- A. He had been taught by the greatest of all human teachers, Paul.
- B. He had seen Paul's beautiful example.
- C. He had no doubt taught many and brought some to Christ.
- D. He had endured hardships with Paul as a good soldier should, II Tim. 2:3.

E. He fell away, Heb. 6:4-8.

  1. II Pet. 2:20-22.

F. What hardship could not do, the love of the world did . . . it led him away.

G. Demas is not the last Christian who fell away when he went away from home to the big city.

  1. It is easy to keep our footing when we are at home; everyone knows us and knows what to expect of us . . . in Rome, it is different.
  2. "The most dangerous thing in the world is to go off where nobody knows you." Woodrow Wilson.

**V. Lessons to Remember:**

A. "We should not be too critical of Demas because so many of us today are like him."

B. A deserter like Demas helps us to appreciate a faithful friend like Luke, II Tim. 4:11.

C. The true quality of a friendship is known only when it is tested.

D. Faith that depends upon Christ will stand, but faith that rests upon a preacher will crumble like sand.

E. Stop and think how much hurt our desertion will cause those who are counting on us.

F. No one has much pity or sympathy for a deserter, even he himself.

G. We honor ex-presidents, ex-mayors, etc., but never ex-Christians, ex-preachers. For there is no possibility of serving out our time. It is like a dishonorable discharge.

H. He forever tarnished the name "Demas."

I. He illustrates the danger of "looking back" to the world, Lk. 9:62.

J. Going to Rome will distinguish between the real and nominal Christians.

K. Always be aware that you, like Demas, can fall away from the Lord and lose your soul. Be ever on guard.

L. The love of the world will rob you of heaven's reward! Jas. 4:4.

## DORCAS, THE BENEVOLENT SAINT

### Acts 9:36-42

INTRO: The story of Dorcas in Acts 9 is one of those beautiful character sketches that makes our Bible a perpetual best seller. Profound lessons can be taught and easily learned by studying the lives of people who learned these lessons and demonstrated them in their actions.

**I. Background Information.**

A. Her home, Joppa.

  1. An ancient sea-port located some 34 miles northwest of Jerusalem.

  2. Most of its people made their living as fishermen.

    a. This cost many a man his life and left numerous widows and fatherless children.

B. The church was planted there early, probably by Philip.

C. Dorcas, a Christian lady who had befriended and assisted numerous poor people, had died.

D. Peter, by the power of God, raised her from the dead.
  1. This mighty miracle was witnessed and authenticated by the multitude of mourners.
  2. This miracle occurred as they engaged in the usual Jewish funeral customs of that day.
    a. No enbalming, therefore a short wait before burial.
    b. The body was washed, anointed, perfumed and dressed.
    c. Displayed in a room of the home.
    d. Mourners consisted of family, friends and professionals.

**II. Dorcas was a Christian Philanthropist.**

A. She is called a "disciple," Acts 11:26.
  1. A disciple is a student of Christ.
  2. A disciple is a doer and not a hearer only, Jas. 1:22.
  3. One becomes a disciple when he is baptized, Matt. 28:19.

B. She was a working, serving disciple.
  1. She had learned that faith without works was dead by itself, Jas. 2:26.
  2. She was full of good works, Acts 9:36.
  3. She was great, because she was willing to serve her fellowman, Matt. 20:26.

C. She was a benevolent philanthropist.
  1. She was full of alms deeds, Acts 9:26.
  2. She had pure religion, Jas. 1:27.

3. She had learned that *being good* means *doing good.*
4. Some people like to propose good works for others to do . . . not Dorcas.
5. She was charitable without being condescending.
    a. Jas. 1:5, God gives without insulting.
    b. So did Dorcas, the public outpouring of grief was evidence that she was not condescending toward those she assisted.
6. Very likely, she was a woman of some wealth, to be such a benefactress.

D. She was a beautiful person.
1. Her name means "gazelle," i.e. beautiful and graceful.
    a. Tabitha, the Aramaic form for gazelle.
2. Though we know nothing of her physical appearance, yet we know that she had "the beauty of holiness," I Chron. 16:29.
3. "What is beauty? Not the show of shapely limbs and features. No;
These are but the flowers
That have their dated hours
  To breathe their momentary sweets and go.
Tis the stainless soul within
  That outshines the fairest skin."
4. I Pet. 3:1-5, Beauty of a pure soul is far more impressive than outward beauty. It never fades. Prov. 31:10-31.

## III. She was Mourned and Missed.

A. What greater memorial service could one have at his passing than Dorcas had.

B. Will the life I am living leave my permanent mark or imprint on the world when I am gone?

C. Or will people heave a sigh of relief because one more problem is out of the way?

D. Her death was a great loss to the congregation in Joppa. Though no one is indispensable, yet some saints are such noble helpers that they will be sorely missed and their place not easily filled.

**IV. She was Raised from the Dead by Peter.**

A. For her it meant a return to the sorrows and toils of earth life ... to face death yet again.

B. For the church, the return of a great helper.

C. For the community:

1. A benefactor restored to bless the poor.
2. A great number of conversions because of the miracle.

D. For us: Her resurrection is a foreshadowing of that day when the Lord shall raise and claim his own.

1. I Thess. 4: 13-17.

**V. Lessons to Remember:**

A. Do what you can with what you have, rather than dream about what you would do with riches you haven't got.

B. Christ teaches us not just to live and let live, but to live and help live.

C. Christianity is a religion of living, serving and giving.

D. Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in your life.

E. Let our women and girls be holy disciples as was this saintly woman who was full of good works and almsdeeds.

F. May our religion be pure before God, with appropriate care for the poor and distressed.

G. Remember that being good demands doing good.

H. Let our goodness reach out to *all* men, not just fellow-Christians, Gal. 6: 10.

I. Never treat the object of your charity with contempt.

J. May our friends and brethren miss us when we are gone because of our godly and helpful life.

## EPAPHRODITUS, THE MAN WHO GAMBLED HIS LIFE FOR CHRIST

### Phil. 2:25-30

INTRO: The history of the church is the history of dedicated servants. Many of the greatest men are little known ... yet the contribution of these men is unmeasurable. Such a one is Epaphroditus.

**I. The Background.**

A. Paul was imprisoned in Rome.
  1. For preaching the gospel.
  2. Waiting for a hearing before the emperor.
  3. He was allowed to live in a private dwelling under constant guard. Acts 28: 16, 30-31.

B. The church at Philippi sent a gift to assist him.
  1. They were Paul's first church established on European soil ... in Macedonia.

2. They had been his mission supporters from the very beginning, Phil. 4:15.
3. An especially close relationship of love and fellowship existed between Paul and the Philippian saints. This letter is often styled, his love letter.
4. Phil. 4:10, Their love had blossomed out again. (See the Greek.)

C. The church sent their gift by their own personal messenger, Epaphroditus.
   1. He was likely the preacher of the congregation.
   2. He personally brought their love and concern.
   3. He stayed to assist Paul in the work.

D. While in Rome, Epaphroditus had fallen ill and had almost died, Phil. 2:27.

E. Now Paul was sending him back to the home church, Phil. 2:25.
   1. Paul wanted to relieve their anxiety.
   2. He unselfishly gave up this noble helper.
   3. He sends the Philippian letter by Epaphroditus and includes this glowing recommendation.

**II. About the man.**

A. His name, Epaphroditus, means "lovely."
   1. Its shortened form is Epaphras.

B. His bravery: To travel great distances in those days took a brave and hearty soul.
   1. The toil and drudgery of walking, horseback, sailing.
   2. The poor, almost nonexistent, accommodations.
   3. The ever-present dangers.

        - a. Robbers
        - b. Accidents
        - c. Illness
- C. His tenderness and compassion.
    - 1. Toward Paul, the prisoner, in staying to help him.
    - 2. Toward the Philippian brethren.
        - a. Whom he missed dearly.
        - b. For whom he worried lest they worry about him.
- D. His trustworthiness.
    - 1. They trusted him to bear their gift.
    - 2. Paul entrusted him to bear his precious letter.
- E. His unflagging zeal for the work of Christ.
    - 1. Phil. 2:30.
    - 2. He hazarded his life to accomplish his mission for the church.
        - a. In taking such a journey in view of the risks.
        - b. In being intimately associated with Paul in Rome; he too might have been arrested.
        - c. In going to a place where a virulent strain of malaria was commonly contracted.
            - (1) Known as the terrible Roman fever.
    - 3. The expression "hazarding his life" is from the Greek *parabolauesthai*, which describes the gambler who stakes everything on the turn of the dice.
    - 4. In the early days of the church, there were brethren who risked their lives and well-being

regularly in ministering to those who were ill with contagious diseases or imprisoned. They were called *parobolani,* those who gambled with their lives.

**III. Paul's Word Portrait of Epaphroditus, Phil. 2:25.**

A. "My brother."

1. Brothers in Christ with a common Father.
2. Brothers in heart from their experience of sharing.

B. "My fellow-worker."

1. Epaphroditus was not one to drop the gift and then be off to tour the "eternal city."
2. He immediately threw himself into the work with an almost reckless zeal.
3. He gladly did for Paul what he could not do due to his house arrest, Matt. 20:26-27.

C. "My fellow soldier."

1. He had stood in the ranks and faced the enemy with Paul. His courage and skill were proven.
2. He deserved a hero's welcome.

D. "Your Messenger."

1. *Apostolos,* one sent with a message or on an errand.
2. Among Christians this cast his name among the great leaders of the kingdom, even though he was not one of the twelve.

E. "Your Minister" or servant. But not the common word which indicated a slave who had to serve.

1. *Leitourgoi,* a public benefactor who of his

own expense financed or endowed civic and cultural projects.

**IV. Lessons to Remember:**

A. May we have the concern for missionaries that the Philippian church had to be *personally* involved.

B. May each of us be as trustworthy in our work as was Epaphroditus.

C. Let us love our home congregation as he did.

D. Each of us should be benefactors, ready unto every good work, Tit. 2: 14.

E. When we visit the sick and imprisoned, we minister unto Christ, Matt. 25: 40.

F. May we love the Lord enough that we will hazard ourselves for the wellbeing of His cause.

G. Always respect and honor saints like Epaphroditus who serve with such a sacrificial zeal.

H. Remember that he that is greatest in the kingdom shall be the servant.

## EUODIA AND SYNTYCHE

### Ladies with a Problem

### Phil. 4:2-3

INTRO: Women played an important role in the church in Philippi:

Paul first preached to women.

Women were the first converts.

Women first opened their homes to the missionaries.

Women were prominent in the congregation.

Women were the only recorded problem in the church. Three bits of information tells us all we know of these Christian ladies.

**I. They had labored with Paul in the gospel.**

A. Women have an important work role in the church.

   1. Not as public proclaimers to men, I Tim. 2: 12, I Cor. 14: 33-34.

B. Lk. 8: 3, devoted women ministered unto Jesus of their substance.

C. There are Christian duties that a woman can fulfill better than men:

   1. Tit. 2: 3-4, training younger women.
   2. II Tim. 1: 5, training children.
   3. Relieving the afflicted and ministering to the sick, I Tim. 5: 9-10.
   4. Teaching the lost privately to certain ones, Acts 18: 24-26.

D. Every preacher has enjoyed the help of such godly women, every congregation that grows will have a number of them.

**II. Their names were written in the book of life.**

A. Every ancient city had its register of citizens.

B. God has his record of all the citizens of the heavenly kingdom.

   1. Phil. 3: 20, our citizenship is in heaven.
   2. Rev. 21: 27, Only they can go into heaven whose name is in the book.
   3. Rev. 20: 12, 15, Those not in the book will taste hell.

    4. Acts 16: 14-15, Our names are written in the book when we obey the gospel as did Lydia.
- C. Ex. 32: 32, Unfaithful citizens will be blotted out of God's book.

**III. They had become alienated and needed to be reconciled.**

- A. He urged each to be responsible for solving the problem.
    1. We need to remember this when we have problems with others, Matt. 18: 15.
    2. Matt. 5: 23-24.
- B. Their quarrel was hurting themselves and the church.
    1. I Cor. 1: 10, There should be no divisions among us.
    2. Disunity between saints gives Satan an occasion to blaspheme the church.
    3. It disheartens and discourages brethren.
    4. It brings good works to a standstill.
    5. It turns away souls in need of salvation.
- C. Being Christians who had actively worked with Paul, they should have known better than this.
    1. Euodia's name meant "fragrant."
    2. Someone suggested that they had better been named Odious and Soon touchy.
- D. Paul asked 'his yokefellow" in Philippi to help them solve their problem (Perhaps Epaphroditus).
    1. When saints have discord, every available helper should seek to find a solution.

    2. Matt. 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers." The church always needs more peacemakers.
- E. Rom. 14:19, "Let us follow after things which make for peace."
    1. Selflessness.
    2. Forgiveness.
    3. Consideration and kindness.
    4. Putting the kingdom first.

**IV. Lessons to Remember:**

- A. Amos 3:3, "Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?"
- B. Nations will never rise above the quality of their women, nor will a congregation.
- C. Few people are fortunate enough to be listed in God's book, but these live with a shadow across their record ... their discord.
- D. What will we be remembered for when the history of our congregation is written?
- E. Are you one who is co-laborer in the gospel?
- F. Is your name written in the book of life?
- G. May we always be peacemakers.
- H. "Let us follow after things which make for peace."

## A FATHER WITH TWO PROBLEM SONS*

### Lk. 15:11-32

INTRO: Among the most familiar and best loved of Christ's parables is that of the Prodigal Son. It is as relevant and current as the daily news.

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* I am indebted to Leslie G. Thomas for some of the thoughts of this lesson.

Parables teach by using real life situations to illustrate moral and spiritual lessons.

Parables had a four-fold purpose.

1. To reveal truth by comparing the unknown with the known.
2. They concealed the truth from those who would abuse it.
3. They embalmed or preserved the lesson taught.
4. They cause men to consent to the truth before realizing it was intended for them.

This one is described as "the pearl of the parables." It is one of a package of three that teach God's saving love for sinners.

We will study this story by noting what we can learn about each of the persons involved.

## I. The Younger Son.

A. His request, 15: 11-12.

  1. He had grown weary of the wholesome restraints of his father's house.
  2. He wanted to be free and independent of all authority and interference.
  3. He could not wait for his inheritance until his father's death.

B. His choice of a life style — hedonism. 15: 13-16.

  1. There is a kind of pleasure in sin and wrongdoing, Heb. 11:25.
  2. He wasted his substance in riotous living.
    a. A sinful life is the most wasteful thing of all.

C. The wages of his sin: degradation and poverty.
  1. The way of a transgressor is hard, Prov. 13: 15.
  2. The finished product of the brewer's art is not displayed.

D. His reflection and repentance, 15: 17-20.
  1. When once the blinded eyes of the sinner are opened, he can never be content to continue in sin.
  2. "He came to himself." No human being is truly himself while engaged in sin.
    a. We were meant for something better than the degradation.
  3. He reflected.
    a. On his present miserable condition.
    b. On his past errors and follies.
    c. He recalled the privileges and blessings he had forfeited.
    d. He realized what had to be done to reclaim his dignity.
  4. He repented, he made up his mind to change things, to go home, Matt. 21: 28-29.

E. His return, 15: 20.
  1. Only he could do that one vital thing, no one else could do it for him.
  2. Only then could he hope for reception and restoration.

F. Note the steps away from God.
  1. Self-will.
  2. Selfishness.
  3. Separation.

    4. Sensuality.
    5. Self-abasement.
    6. Starvation.
- G. Note too the steps back home.
    1. Realization.
    2. Repentance.
    3. Resolution.
    4. Return.
    5. Reconciliation.
    6. Reclothing.
    7. Rejoicing.

## II. The Father, 15:20b-24.

- A. Loving. His love never failed, even when his son went away.
- B. Caring. He was daily, anxiously watching for his son's return.
- C. Forgiving. He forgave without upbraiding and humiliating.
- D. Restoring. He fully restored the returned prodigal.
- E. He rejoiced and wished to share his joy with all.

## III. The Elder Brother, 15:25-32.

- A. Why he refused to go in.
    1. He had the wrong attitude toward his brother.
        - a. Perhaps he had never liked him. They were so different.
        - b. Not only did he not rejoice at the prodigal's return, he could not understand why anyone else could rejoice.
    2. He did not understand his father's ways.

        - a. He could have understood if it were he being honored.
        - b. Was this not putting a premium on sin and rewarding the prodigal?
    - 3. He got his information and impressions from the wrong source.
        - a. He should have gone in and seen for himself.
        - b. One look at his long-lost brother might have softened his heart and changed everything.
        - c. Rather, he called a servant and inquired of him.
    - 4. He felt discriminated against.
        - a. Perhaps it was really envy.
        - b. Prov. 14: 30, rottenness of the bones.
- B. The flaws of his character.
    - 1. He would rather have seen the sinner destroyed or punished, than saved.
    - 2. His attitude shows that his obedience to the father had been grim duty, not loving service.
    - 3. He had no sympathy.
        - a. He spoke of "your son", not "my brother."
        - b. He would gladly have kicked the fallen man further into the gutter rather than lend a helping hand to lift him.
    - 4. Although he could not see it, really he was the one alienated, for he was completely out of sympathy with his father, his brother, the family servants ... even God.
- C. Some things he missed.

1. He missed the merriment and joy of the celebration.
2. He missed his chance of making others happy.

## IV. Lessons to Remember:

A. This parable teaches us the sinner's responsibility in returning to God to secure salvation. Matt. 11:28.

B. It reminds us that the way of the transgressor is hard. Prov. 13:15.

C. Sin is but a departure from God, a desire to be independent of him. It is a casting off our allegience to him and a determination to do as we please.

D. Whoever committeth sin is a bondservant of sin, John 8:34.

E. False pride is at the root of most sins.

F. Sin leads us to gratify self to the neglect and hurt of others.

G. People take all of God's gifts, i.e., life, health, intelligence, jobs and family and then leave God and go away into a far country away from him.

H. His body was hungry, but his worst famine was that of the soul. Amos 8:11.

I. When one does not see the need to return to God he is helpless.

J. No sinner who ever went home to God was rejected. I Tim. 1:15.

K. There is joy in earth and in heaven when a sinner repents, Lk. 15:10.

L. The elder brother is an example of religion that is made of works without grace. Eph. 2:8-9.

M. The attitude of the elder brother will choke a church to death.

N. The attitude of the father will make us like Christ and His Father.

O. The elder brother, like the Pharisees, could not realize that he was in a worse spiritual state than the returned prodigal.

P. Are you like one of the three characters of our story?
  1. A prodigal who needs to return?
  2. A brother who cannot forgive.
  3. A father who is ready to forgive and welcome a wanderer home.

## GAMALIEL

### The Adviser of Caution

INTRO: A mighty clash occurred when the gladiators of Christ went forth in the name of Jesus and boldly challenged even the citadel of Judaism . . . by preaching in the temple precincts at Jerusalem. In the midst of a heated and violent confrontation, a powerful voice of moderation was heard that completely neutralized the conflict. Hear Luke's record of the events of that day. Acts 5:25-42.

**I. About our subject.**

A. His name Gamaliel meant "God's reward."

B. He was grandson of the great rabbi, Hillel.

C. He was "a doctor of the law;" a rabbi, who was a professor of the Jewish religion training rabbinic students.

  1. Tradition says 1,000 students studied under him.

D. He taught young Saul of Tarsus, Acts 22:3.

E. He enjoyed the highest honor among the Jews, being called Rabban, "my great master."

F. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, the council of 70 plus the high priest.
  1. The most distinguished men of the nation.
  2. They held the final word in all moral, religious matters.

G. He was a Pharisee.
  1. They were small in numbers (some 6,000) but powerful.
  2. They controlled the synagogues.
  3. They believed in a resurrection, angels and spirits.
  4. They were "legalists" in their approach to religion.
    a. They loved the Law more than God.
    b. They had little room for love, mercy, understanding or fairness.
    c. They loved to make and multiply laws for others.
    d. They especially loved to forbid others to exercise their God given liberties.
    e. They were very judgmental of others while being very lenient on themselves.

H. He was very generous and broadminded in his views.

I. He was "held in honor among all the people."
  a. Jews called him, "The Beauty of the Law."

    b. When he died they said, "that reverence for the law, purity, and continence had perished."

  J. He died in 50 A.D.

  K. An ancient Christian tradition claimed that he and his two sons obeyed the gospel ... but this is not likely.

**II. Gamaliel's Advice, Acts 5:35-39.**

  A. Why did he so advise?

    1. Was he personally convinced that God was with them?

    2. Was he like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple?

    3. Was he siding with them against the Sadducees because of their teaching on the resurrection? Comp. Acts 23:6-8.

    4. Did he truly realize that persecution would only fan the flames of zeal, which might burn out, if left alone?

    5. Was he a super cautious man looking for a utilitarian way to face and solve a problem?

  B. His words are not those of an inspired man.

    1. The Bible contains the words of many uninspired people including:

      a. Job's wife.

      b. Satan.

    2. Inspiration only guarantees the correct recording of what is said, not its truthfulness in such cases.

  C. His words are of human origin and thus are not necessarily God's advice nor are they binding.

D. In some cases his advice is obviously wrong.
  1. Do we really believe that all doctrines not of God will soon die?
  2. What of Catholicism, Mohammedanism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses?

E. It contradicts other plain Scripture teachings.
  1. Phil. 1:16.
  2. Rom. 16:17.
  3. I Tim. 6:12.
  4. II Cor. 10:3-5.
  5. Jas. 4:7, "resist the devil."

F. It is sometimes a wise course in dealing with:
  1. Attention seekers.
  2. Senseless zealots.
  3. Harmless eccentrics.
  4. Prov. 26:20.
  5. Prov. 26:4-5.

G. Gamaliel's advice makes a convenient counsel for the spiritually idle and "politicians" of the world.

**III. Lessons to Remember:**

A. The Jews would have left the apostles alone if they would have left the Jews alone. But they could not do this and be loyal to God.

B. The cautious man may sometimes do a good work in wisely checking over-impulsive men and unthoughtout schemes.

C. The cautious man may impede enterprise, progress and rapid growth in the church.

D. There are times when we need to burn our bridges when we set out to do battle.

E. The goodness of a cause may not always be judged by its success. Evil often succeeds greatly.

F. We cannot discharge our duty to God towards error by just ignoring it. We must fight the good fight of faith, I Tim. 6:12.

G. We must not decide how to treat sin and error on the basis of what results it will bring us.

H. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me. . . ." Matt. 12:30.

I. May God give us the wisdom to discern between fence-straddling and knowing when to do battle or to ignore an opponent, and the courage to take the right stand.

J. May we never trust our soul's relation to God upon the uncertain advice of men.

## GOLIATH

### Who Feared Neither God Nor Man

### I Sam. 17:1-58

INTRO: Every generation produces its "giants" who challenge the cause of Jehovah and defy the living God. Every generation *also* produces its Davids who slay these giants.

**I. The Setting:**

A. The powerful Philistine army had advanced to within 16 miles of Jerusalem.

B. King Saul and the army of Israel had gone forth to block their invasion.

C. For 40 days the troops had been at a stand off.

D. Each army occupied high ground with an open valley between them. A brook flowed through its midst.

   1. The valley was called the "Valley of Terebinth" after the type of trees growing there.
   2. The Philistines were encamped in a place called Ephes-dammin.

## II. The Challenge.

A. The Philistines sent forth a champion to challenge any man of the Hebrews to fight him alone.

B. As representatives of their armies, they would determine the battle.

   1. The side defeated would submit to the victors without battle.

C. Ancient people often did this, thinking that their tribal god would aid the chosen warrior and the strongest god would win.

D. Saul and the Hebrew warriors were terrified at the sight of their challenger and cowed in fear, I Sam. 17: 11.

E. The challenge and accompanying insults had been going on for 40 days, I Sam. 17: 16.

## III. King Saul:

A. He was a tall, powerful man.

   1. I Sam. 10: 23.

B. He had previously proven himself to be a bold, capable warrior.

C. Because of his insubordinate behavior, God had rejected him as King and taken His spirit away from Saul.

    1. I Sam. 15:26.
    2. I Sam. 16:14.
- D. Now we see him cowering in his tent while Israel and her God are daily blasphemed by the heathen.

## IV. David.

- A. A young man, age 17-20.
- B. A shepherd boy, toughened by his experience in the wilderness.
- C. The youngest son of Jesse.
- D. A young man of devout faith and confidence in God.
- E. He had had the experience of killing a lion and a bear that had attacked his sheep, I Sam. 17:34-36.
    1. This made him confident he could handle Goliath.

## V. Goliath.

- A. His nationality—a Philistine.
    1. An aggressive people believed to be from the island of Crete in the Mediterranean.
    2. They had migrated to Canaan and taken the land on the southern Mediterranean coast.
    3. They harassed and dominated the Hebrews for a long period of time.
- B. His home—Gath.
    1. Gath means "the wine press."
    2. It was one of five major cities of the Philistine league: Ashdod, Ekron, Ashkelon, and Gaza.
- C. His name meant "an exile."

D. His stature.
  1. He stood six cubits and a span.
     a. At 18 inches per cubit and 6 inches for a span, that would be 9 ft. 6 inches tall.
  2. On rare occasions a giant will be found even now.
     a. Robert Wadlow of Alton, Ill.
        1) Stood 8 ft. 11 in. tall, weighed 491 lbs.
        2) He was born Feb. 22, 1918 and died July 15, 1940.
        3) See *Guiness' Book of Records.*
  3. Three clans of giants lived in southern Canaan, Deut. 2:10-11, 20-21.
  4. The 12 spies sent out by Moses saw some of these at Hebron, Num. 13:31-33.
  5. They were driven out by the Hebrews under Joshua, Josh. 11:21-22.
  6. Og, king of Bashan was also a giant, Deut. 3:11.
     a. His bed was 9 cubits x 4 cubits = 13½ ft. x 6 ft.
  7. Goliath was only one of a family of giants, all of whom were warriors, I Chron. 20:4-8.

E. His Armour, I Sam. 17:5-7.
  1. Brass Helmet. Brass weapons and arms were new to the Hebrews.
  2. A coat of mail weighing 5,000 shekels of brass.
     a. An ancient European coat of mail weighed some 55 lbs.
     b. Goliath's would have weighed at least 150 lbs.

    3. Greaves of brass upon his legs, i.e., shin guards.
    4. A javelin of brass.
    5. A spear with a large shank and an iron head weighing more than 10 lbs.
    6. Philistine warriors usually wore feather plumes.
    7. He had a helper who carried his heavy shield.
    8. This further confirms his great size and strength.
    9. The cumbersome weight of all his equipment would have made it hard for Goliath to maneuver against a lightly armed foe like David.

F. His Attitude.

1. He defied the army of Israel, I Sam. 17:10.
2. He disdained David, I Sam. 17:42.
3. He trusted his:
    a. Superior physical strength.
    b. His superior weapons, I Sam. 17:45.
    c. Pagan gods, I Sam. 17:43.
4. He defied and challenged Israel's God.
    a. He believed his god was superior.

**VI. The Battle.**

A. David sheds the heavy armour of Saul.

B. He grasped his shepherd's rod and sling.

C. Moving out, he selected five stones from the creek bed as he crossed it.

D. See the ill-armed shepherd boy advancing toward the seasoned warrior in full battle regalia.

E. Hear the roaring curses and insults from the giant.

F. Behold David's faith.
   1. "I come to thee in the name of Jehovah," I Sam. 17:45.
   2. "This day will Jehovah deliver thee into my hand; and I will smite thee, and take thy head from off thee." 17:46.
   3. "That all this assembly may know that Jehovah saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is Jehovah's...." 17:47.

G. Watch as the heavy laden giant slowly advances with lumbering gait ready to crush the lad.

H. See young David dart forward, sling in motion.

I. Hear the whir of the sling and see its deadly missile let fly straight to its intended mark.

J. Hear the thud as the stone imbeds in Goliath's forehead.

K. Hear the crashing of his armour as he crumbles to the earth with a mortal groan.

L. Goliath's armour bearer flees in fright.

M. David rushes forward and drawing the enemy's sword, hacks his head from his lifeless body.

**VII. The Results, I Sam. 17:52-53.**

A. Israel troops found new courage and forthwith attacked.

B. The Philistines were routed with great slaughter.

C. David was honored throughout the land.

**VIII. Lessons to Remember:**

A. We still are plagued with bold giants of paganism who challenge God's people while they hover in their church "tents" and thank God that they can serve Him without molestation.

B. We must not, like Israel's army, be satisfied with a stand-off with the forces of evil. There must be victory!

C. We admire the simple, trusting faith of the boy David.

D. David believed that there was a cause worth fighting for. (I Sam. 17:29). So must we.

E. Eliab would have discouraged David because of his youth. Thank God he did not succeed. I Sam. 17:28-29.

F. Let us not despise the young who want to serve Jehovah. I Tim. 4:11.

G. Goliath learned the hard way that battles are not always won by superior strength and weapons.

H. The man who defies God must answer to God.

I. When the battle is Jehovah's, He will assure the victory.

J. The faith and courage of just one person will encourage a whole army that was previously discouraged.

K. "Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off." I Kings 20:11.

L. Armor of brass cannot deliver a man from God's sentence of death.

M. The Christian's armor will meet every need. Eph. 6:13-18.

N. David's faith won the victory only when he dared to commit himself to the action needed.

O. Are you willing to go to battle for God's cause as did David?

# HEROD ANTIPAS, HERODIAS, AND SALOME

## The Devil's Trio

## Mk. 6:14-29

INTRO: One of the darkest chapters in human history is the execution of John the Baptizer and the events leading thereto. Three people were responsible for this foul deed and surely no more unholy trio ever lived.

**I. The Family Tree:**

- A. All of them were descended from the diabolical Herod the Great who exceeded them all in cruelty.
  - 1. He ordered the slaughter of the babes of Bethelehem, Matt. 2: 16-18.
- B. Herod was married to ten different women.
- C. His wife Mariamne the Hasmonean gave him two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, both of whom he murdered.
- D. Herodias of our study was the daughter of Aristobulus.
- E. Another wife, Mariamne the Boethusian, gave Herod a son named Herod Philip.
- F. Herod Philip married Herodias, his niece.
- G. Herod Philip and Herodias had a daughter named Salome.
- H. Herod the Great married Malthake who gave him Archelaus and Herod Antipas.
- I. Herod Antipas first married the daughter of Aretas, King of Arabia.
- J. While visiting his brother Herod Philip in Rome, Antipas seduced Herodias, his brother's wife and persuaded her to return with him to Palestine.

    1. Herodias was Antipas' niece.
    2. She was also his sister-in-law.
- K. Herod the Great married Cleopatra of Jerusalem and had a son, Philip the Tetrach, who married Salome, his niece and grandniece.

## II. The Background of the Situation.

- A. John the Baptizer had rebuked Antipas for his marriage to Herodias, Mk. 6: 18.
    1. Their marriage was adulterous and incestuous, Lev. 18: 16, 20.
- B. Antipas had John arrested and imprisoned.
    1. Herod arrested John "for the sake of Herodias," Matt. 14: 3.
        - a. At Machaerus, the castle overlooking the Dead Sea.
    2. Herod wanted to kill John but feared the response of the masses who counted John a prophet. He spared him, Matt. 14:5.
    3. "Herodias set herself against him and desired to kill him," Mk. 6: 19.
    4. "Herod feared John, knowing he was a righteous and holy man," Mk. 6: 20.
    5. He heard John and was much perplexed, hearing him gladly, Mk. 6: 20.

## III. The King's Birthday Party, Mk. 6:21-23.

- A. The great banquet.
- B. The sensuous dance of Salome.
    1. Such dances were always licentious.
    2. A princess would never perform such a dance if she had any virtue at all.

C. The rash vow, Mk. 6:23.

**IV. The Diabolic Request, Mk. 6:24-29.**

A. The evil mother used her foolish daughter to gain her end.

B. The king was sorry, but not enough to refuse the request.

1. He feared what his guests would say if he reneged.

C. A prophet died.

**V. Antipas and Herodias' Final Chapter.**

A. Aretas, King of Arabia, declared war on Herod to avenge his daughter's honor and severely defeated him.

B. Herod went to Rome to gain their help against Aretas.

C. His nephew Agrippa had gone before and prejudiced Emperor Caligula against Antipas.

D. Caligula banished Antipas and Herodias to Lyons in Gaul (France).

E. Josephus attributed his fall to a visitation of God for his murder of John.

**VI. Lessons to Remember:**

A. The evil Herod family was a corrupt tree bearing evil fruit in every generation.

B. He admired a man like John who knew the right, who spoke the right he knew and who suffered for the right he spoke. May we have 10,000 such men.

C. We see the malice of the wicked against the reprovers of their sins! John was not the last prophet so to suffer.

D. When a man has a mind to do an evil work, a time will be found for doing it.

E. None are so cruel as the dissolute. Sensuality and cruelty go hand in hand.

F. We are reminded of the sacredness of God's marriage law. One man for one woman for a life-time. God hates putting away, Mal. 2:16.

G. We see a small part of the evil dancing has caused in the world. "Dancing has destroyed more piety, ruined more girls, disturbed more churches, broken the peace of more families, caused more tragic deaths, than anything with which women have been tempted."

H. The social dance licenses what outside the dance floor is regarded as improper, immoral and insulting.

I. We mark the sin of the mother who would allow her daughter to engage in such a dance. When young people engage in dancing, it is the parents who must be held responsible.

J. "Be not rash with thy mouth," Eccle. 5:2.

K. "He that ruleth his spirit (is greater) than he that taketh a city," Prov. 16:32.

L. The most solemn oath cannot bind a man to do wrong.

M. Herod would rather brave the anger of God than the contempt of vain men.

N. Men fear to be hanged for what they fear not to be damned.

O. There is no cowardice so despicable as that which does wrong from fear of ridicule.

P. Kings will wage war for an inch of land and then sacrifice half a kingdom for a pretty woman.

Q. Many a man has done things he afterwards bitterly regretted because he had not the moral courage to do the right thing.

## HERODTHE GREAT

### The Chief of Sinners

### Matt. 2:1-8, 12, 16

INTRO: In all the annals of human history, no more evil and sadistic person is found than Herod the Great. This man's name lives on today because of his efforts to kill the infant Savior. While the New Testament gives only brief mention of this tyrant, ancient history gives us a full and vivid record of his life and reign. We are especially indebted to Josephus the Jewish historian for his account of Herod.

**I. About the Man:**

A. His race: He was an Idumaean, a descendant of Esau.

1. He married a Jewess to try to gain respect of the Hebrews.

B. His parents:

1. Antipater, father. He was a shrewd political manipulator.
2. Cyprus, mother.

C. His brothers, Pheroras, Phasael, Joseph.

1. His sister: Salome.

D. His own personal family:
   1. He had 10 wives.
   2. His first wife, Doris, he put away.
   3. The love of his life was Mariamne, royal princess of the Hasmonean family.

E. Religion: He was a godless man with no religious loyalties. He did whatever was needed to gain and hold power.

F. His character: He was insanely suspicious, deceitful, treacherous, unscrupulous, and merciless.

G. Personally: He was physically strong, an excellent hunter, a skilled horseman, a fearless warrior, an accurate archer and javelin thrower.

## II. Herod's Administration.

A. His father appointed him governor of Galilee in 47 B.C. at 25 years of age.

B. The Romans made him king of the Jews in 40 B.C.
   1. Because of a coup led by members of the Hasmonean family aided by the Parthians he had lost his office.
   2. With the help of the Romans he gained the whole kingdom.
   3. Mark Anthony conferred upon him his kingship.

C. Herod was a great friend of and loyal subject to the Romans and cultivated their favor, using it to stay in power.

D. The one fixed, unswerving policy of Herod was to remove every opponent or contender regardless of the relationship or cost.

E. He dealt harshly with the Sadducees and Pharisees. He was hated by all parties, especially the Zealots who worked unceasingly against him.

**III. His Accomplishments.**

A. While Herod was without doubt one of humanity's cruelest men, he did have skills and abilities and accomplished much that should be noted.

B. He could show compassion for his subjects.

  1. During the famine of 25 B.C. he melted down his own golden plate to buy grain for the hungry.
  2. Twice he drastically reduced taxes in hard times, in 20 and 14 B.C.

C. He provided strong stable government to Palestine.

  1. He used spies and force to maintain it.

D. He was not an aggressor towards his neighbors.

E. He was an enthusiastic patron of culture and the fine arts.

F. His ambition was to be known as a great builder.

  1. He rebuilt the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.
     a. He made it larger and more splendid than Solomon's.
     b. Work began in 19 B.C. and was not completed until 64 A.D. It was destroyed within six years by the Romans.
  2. He beautified Jerusalem with a theatre, amphitheatre, hippodrome and his own royal palace.
  3. He rebuilt the city of Samaria, calling it Sebaste.

4. He rebuilt the old port city of Strato's Tower, naming it Ceasarea, making it one of the Mediterranean's finest ports.
    a. It had a spectacular sea wall built in 120 ft. of water.
5. He built numerous forts and temples in the land and even in foreign cities.

G. Among his heathen peers he earned the title, Herod the *Great.*

## IV. His Cruelties:

A. It was in cruelty that he excelled all others and won his place in history.

B. When he had gained his power he had virtually all of the Sanhedrian executed. Some 45 chief Jewish leaders were killed.

C. On another occasion he ordered the deaths of 300 of his own court officers.

D. When religious activists tore down the golden eagle which he had placed over the temple gate, he had 42 of them burned to death.

E. The depth of his cruelty is seen in his dealings with his own family.

1. He ordered his young brother-in-law, Aristobulus, the high priest, drowned.
2. He executed his uncle, Joseph.
3. He had Hyrcanus the former high priest killed.
4. His beloved wife Mariamne was put to death in 29 B.C. accusing her of infidelity and attempting to poison him.

    a. He so madly loved her that his remorse and guilt drove him insane.

5. Next to fall victim was Mariamne's mother, Alexandra.
6. He then had his two sons by Mariamne strangled, Alexander and Aristobulus. He had previously designated them his heirs to the throne.
7. He put to death his brother-in-law Costobar and the last two heirs to the Hasmonean throne, the sons of Babas.
8. Five days before his death he had his son Antipater executed for treason.
9. Augustus Caesar said it was safer to be Herod's hog than his son.
10. As he neared death, he ordered all the principle men of the country imprisoned at the Hippodrome in Jericho. They were to be executed at his death that there might be mourning and not rejoicing among the people.
11. Among his last deeds of cruelty was the order to slay all the male babes of Bethlehem to kill Jesus.
    a. Probably about 20 were killed.

## V. His Death.

A. Herod died at Jericho in March or April, 4 B.C. in his 72(?) year.

B. He was buried in splendor in Herodium.

C. He was a pitiful sight in those last days: hated by his subjects, feared by his family, misled by family members. The guilt of the blood of his own family robbing him of all peace and sanity. He found his sole satisfaction in ordering the death of another son, Antipater, who had tried to poison him and in planning the deaths of hundreds of innocent nobles so there would be no rejoicing when he died.

D. The pain of his awful death. He was racked with fever. His body itched continually, he had fluid swelling in his feet and legs. His abdomen was inflamed and he suffered great pain in his colon. Sores on his body added to his misery. His once strong body was a heap of rotting flesh.

E. He attempted suicide but was restrained.

F. His will named his sons as his successor.

   1. Archaelaus, King of Judah and Samaria and Idumea.
   2. Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea.
   3. Herod Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitus.

G. His name was intertwined with the famous names of the ancient Roman world: Pompey, Julius Caesar, Crassus, Mark Anthony, Cleopatra and Augustus.

   1. None of them is considered as vile and evil as Herod.

## VI. Lessons to Remember:

A. We see how selfish ambition can turn a man into a murderous monster.

B. We see the misery that suspicion and distrust can bring upon a life.

C. Like Herod the wicked are afraid:
   1. Of good people because they see their evil and oppose it.
   2. Of wicked people, they can never trust them.
   3. They fear themselves, they have no true courage.
   4. They fear the unexpected.
   5. They constantly fear death.
   6. Perfect love casteth out fear, I John 4: 18.

D. God overturns and frustrates the wisest plans of His enemies.

E. The wicked are angered when their foul schemes against the righteous are blocked.

F. Satan uses evil men to attack those who are like Christ, II Tim. 3: 12.

G. Note the contrast in those in our text.
   1. Herod showed hatred and hostility toward Christ.
   2. The Jewish religious leaders showed complete indifference.
   3. The wise men offered adoring worship to the Savior.

H. In his miserable death, Herod began to reap the iniquity he had sown, Gal. 6: 7.

I. In the great day of judgment God will see that all the injustices of this life are settled. All the Herods will receive their just desserts. II Cor. 5: 10.

J. Herod wanted monuments to preserve his name for posterity, because of his sin his only glory is his infamy. Prov. 10: 7.

# HYMENAEUS AND ALEXANDER
# MEN OF SHIPWRECKED FAITH
## I Tim. 1:18-20

INTRO: Not all who begin the journey to eternity finish the voyage successfully. Some shipwreck along the way. One such example is seen in our subjects.

I. **About These Men:**
   A. They both had become Christians in the past.
   B. It seems evident that they had been prominent leaders, likely preachers.
      1. The attention given them suggests that they were still prominent men.
   C. They were then out of fellowship with the church, and the Lord.
   D. Alexander is probably the one mentioned in Acts 19: 33.
      1. He was of the Jewish race.
   E. He is possibly the Alexander the coppersmith of II Tim. 4: 14.

II. **The Sins They Are Charged With:**
   A. They had made shipwreck concerning the faith, I Tim. 1: 19.
      1. This occured when they *thrust* faith and a good conscience from them.
      2. Here we see Christians who *once* like a proud ship, set sail upon the sea of life, but now are shattered and broken upon some deadly reef of self-indulgence, vice or heresy.
      3. Faith and good conscience are to the Christian

life as ballast is to a ship on the sea. When cast out, the ship is unbalanced and uncontrollable.

4. The word *thrust* suggests the picture of men violently casting away something disagreeable.
    a. Faith and a good conscience were thus rejected.
5. Shipwreck can occur at any point in the saint's voyage to eternity, if he turns his eyes away from Christ and his word which serve as his chart and compass.

B. They had blasphemed, I Tim. 1:20.
    1. They had been speaking evil against the apostle and the true faith of Jesus.

C. They were given to profane babblings that led only to ungodliness, II Tim. 2:16.
    1. This is defined as "godless chatter."

D. They erred concerning the truth of the gospel.
    1. Missed the mark.

E. They said the resurrection is past already, II Tim. 2:18.
    1. This heresy was probably the result of blending Greek philosophy with their Christianity.
    2. They probably sought to make the symbolic resurrection of baptism in Rom. 6:4-5, the only one.
    3. A similar heresy was introduced at Corinth, I Cor. 15:12.
    4. Denying a bodily resurrection would have made them much more palatable to both the Sadduceeic Jews and the Greeks.

F. They had succeeded in overthrowing the faith of some disciples already, II Tim. 2: 18.

G. Their false and destructive message was spreading as a gangrene, II Tim. 2: 17.

  1. A sore that had developed blood poisoning and would be fatal if not stopped.

H. Alexander the coppersmith, had made himself a personal enemy of Paul, II Tim. 4: 14-15.

  1. He had done the apostle much evil.
  2. He had greatly withstood Paul's words.
     a. It is possible that he had testified against Paul in his trial before Ceasar, from this context.

## III. Paul's Response To Their Evil Deeds.

A. He delivered them to Satan, I Tim. 1: 20.

  1. They were disfellowshipped, I Cor. 5: 5.
  2. II Thess. 3: 6.

B. He publicly marked them and their sins.

C. He warned other Christians of them and their evil doings, II Tim. 2: 10-18.

D. He trusted the Lord to give them their just desserts, II Tim. 4:14.

E. He took no personal revenge against them.

F. His primary interest was in protecting the church, Rom. 16: 17-18.

  1. Hopefully the discipline would bring them to repentance, I Cor. 5: 5.

## IV. Lessons to Remember:

A. These erring brethren gained an infamous immortality. For what will you be remembered?

B. They made their will, not God's will, the director of their lives. Such will always end in shipwreck.

C. When men take up some wrong way, their first instinct is to find justification and excuses for themselves.

D. Truth and teachers of truth are hated because they reprove the sins of the wicked.

E. "If one's religion does not better his morals, his moral deficiencies will corrupt his religion," R. Whately.

F Some try to hold faith without a good conscience. This is impossible. It is a hollow, hypocritical thing. Some try to hold a good conscience without faith. This too is impossible. It is superficial and barren; only together can either faith or a good conscience be had.

G. Faithful leaders must ever be on guard against unprincipled opponents.

H. They are difficult to deal with, for all kind or courteous advances they interpret as weakness or fear.

I. Unscrupulous men will twist and make unfair use of your words. Such malicious malcontents can do irreparable harm to the church.

J. A renegade is all the more troublesome because of his familiarity with the side he once espoused. He uses that knowledge with subtle and malicious dexterity.

K. The church must be kept pure even at the cost of a brother or sister cut off by discipline, Matt. 5:29-30.

L. It is better that a brother be excommunicated than that he be left alone in his disobedience or false teaching.

M. In this we see the need of discipline; the gravity of it (deliver them to Satan); the object of it (they may learn not to sin) and the effectiveness of it in warning others.

N. May we guard our hearts and minds so that we never fall to the low level of these shipwrecked brethren.

O. May we always respect and honor the discipline imposed by the Lord's church.

## THE JAILOR AT PHILIPPI

### Acts 16:22-34

INTRO.: While at Troas on the eastern shores of the Aegean Sea, Paul had a vision in which he saw a man of Macedonia pleading, "Come over ... and help us." Acts 16: 9.

Understanding this to be a heavenly message to enter Europe, he, Silas, Luke, and Timothy set out by ship across the Aegean landing at Neapolis. This was about 50 A.D.

They took the Egnation road from Neapolis to Philippi, over Mt. Symbolum, about a ten mile journey.

Their first converts were Lydia and her household, a Jewish woman whom they met by the river Gangites outside the city gate.

While in Philippi, they made their home at her house, Acts 16: 15.

One day as they were going to the place of prayer, a young woman with "a spirit of divination" began to cry out that these were men of the Most High God. Her condition was called a spirit of Python, the ability to foretell the future by the power of Apollo. Ventrilliquism was often used by the people to make it appear that a foreign being was speaking through them. In this case it was a demon which Paul cast out. This enraged the slave girl's owners who had Paul and Silas arrested and dragged before the magistrates. A mob situation arose which resulted in a precipitate sentence by the magistrate who ordered them stripped and beaten with rods, 16:22.

**I. The Jailor's Jail.**

- A. Paul and Silas were delivered into the hands of the chief jailor for incarceration.
- B. He did his job well.
  - 1. He cast them into the inner prison.
    - a. The dungeon.
  - 2. He put their feet in the stocks.
    - a. A wooden structure through which the feet (sometimes the head and hands) were thrust and fastened in place. It kept a prisoner locked in a torturous position.
  - 3. The ancient prisons were in no way comparable to our modern penal institutes.
    - a. They were not separate facilities, rather they were adjuncts of castles and fortresses, often subterranian dungeons.
    - b. Little light or ventilation,
    - c. No sanitary facilities,

        - d. Filled with vermin and insects,
        - e. No medical attention,
        - f. No standards of humanitarian treatment.
    - 4. In those days a man was not imprisoned for terms of punishment, it was only to await trial or punishment.

**II. The prisoners:**

- A. Paul and Silas.
    - 1. Paul was an apostle of Christ.
    - 2. Silas was also called Silvanus.
- B. They were men of God on a mission for Him.
- C. The charges against them were:
    - 1. Troubling our city (public nuisance).
    - 2. Promoting an illegal religion, "... set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, or to observe," 16:21.
- D. Really the owners of the Pythonese girl were angered because their source of income had been cut off, 16:19.
- E. Their only crime was the good they had done in the name of God.
- F. Their unexpected response to their plight:
    - 1. Not cursing, complaining or crying,
    - 2. Rejoicing, singing and praying to God, 16:25.

**III. The Jailor:**

- A. He was a typical pagan Gentile.
- B. He was spiritually asleep, unaware of his lost condition.
- C. He was an awakened sinner.

    1. He had heard of the miracle Paul had worked.
    2. He witnessed the faith and joy of Paul and Silas.
    3. He had experienced the earthquake which God had sent.
    4. He fell trembling before Paul and Silas.

D. He was an anxious, sincere inquirer.
    1. "What must I do to be saved?" 16:30.

E. He was an eager listener, 16:32.

F. He was an humble penitent, 16:33.

G. He was baptized, Acts 16:33.
    1. He was baptized by immersion, Col. 2:12, Acts 8:38.
    2. He was baptized for remission of his sins, Acts 2:38.
    3. He was baptized immediately, recognizing the urgency and importance of it.
    4. He washed and was washed.

I. He became a Christian, a member of Christ's church.
    1. Acts 2:47.
    2. I Cor. 12:13.
    3. John 3:5.

J. He was happy in his salvation, 16:34.

K. He was grateful to those who had helped him save his soul.
    1. He bathed their wounds.
    2. He took them into his home.
    3. He fed them.

## IV. Lessons to Remember:

A. Like the jailor, most sinners are unaware of their lost condition.

B. Christians should be prepared to receive persecution from the wicked for the good they do, as did Paul and Silas.

C. Songs and prayers of faith to God are to the soul as medicine is to the body.

D. They were teaching the prisoners with their psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, even as we teach our fellow-worshippers, Col. 3: 16.

E. We see the providence of God as He provides the earthquake to pave the way for their release and the jailor's salvation.

F. As a heathen, the jailor was ready to take his life. As a Christian we will never consider suicide because we are forbidden to "do murder," Rom. 13: 9.

G. The world's most important question is still, "What must I do to be saved?" Acts 16: 30.

H. The answer is still the same as Jesus originally announced, Mk. 16: 16, Acts 16: 31-33.

I. One of the obvious fruits of true conversion is Christian hospitality such as the jailor shared.

J. True Christianity makes for happy, rejoicing people.

K. Christianity, though embraced one by one, is the religion of the family. Let us not rest until our family is wholly Christian.

# JETHRO REUEL

## The Priest of Midian

## Ex. 18:1-12

INTRO: When Moses fled for his life from Egypt, he found refuge in the house of a man named Jethro Reuel of Midian. A strong and loyal friendship grew up between these two men that blest them both for more than 40 years. We can learn many valuable lessons from Jethro's life.

**I. About the Man:**

A. He was a Midianite, Ex. 2: 15.
  1. Midianites were descended from Abraham through Keturah, Gen. 25: 1-2.
  2. They were generally an idolatrous and wicked people, Num. 22:7, 25:6-8.
  3. Moses later ordered his armies to exterminate the Midianites by God's command, Num. 31: 1-20.

B. His home was in the wild and bleak region of the Western Sinai peninsula.
  1. The Midianites were bedouin, tent dwelling people.

C. His occupation.
  1. Shepherd, Ex. 2: 16.

D. His name:
  1. Jethro — "His excellence."
  2. Reuel — "Friend of God."

E. His family.
  1. He had seven daughters, Ex. 2: 16.
  2. He had at least one son, Hobab, Num. 10:29.

   3. His daughter Zipporah married Moses, Ex. 2:21.
   4. Zipporah gave Moses two sons, Gershom and Eleazar, Ex. 2:22, Ex. 18:3-4.
- F. His religion.
   1. He was a priest of Midian, Ex. 2:16.
   2. He worshipped the one true God as did Israel, Ex. 18:10.
   3. Both Moses and Aaron had fellowship with Jethro as he sacrificed, Ex. 18:12.

## II. Qualities that Made Jethro Great.

- A. He held fast to the true worship of the one God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.
   1. While the other Midianites and neighboring tribes went into idolatry and immorality he and his house served Jehovah.
   2. He maintained the worship of God, as a priest.
   3. He was anxious to hear what God had done, Ex. 18:8-9.
- B. His was a hospitable home.
   1. He was kind and sympathetic to a man in need.
   2. He was trusting and helpful to a stranger.
   3. I Pet. 4:9, "Using hospitality one to another without murmuring."
- C. He gladly gave his daughter up to serve God with her husband in a distant land.
   1. He saw his grandchildren go far away also.
- D. He was a willing helper.

1. His home was a haven for Moses for 40 years.
2. He kept Zipporah and the boys while Moses was on his dangerous mission to Egypt, Ex. 18: 2-6.
3. He willingly helped a younger man to be great.

E. He was a man of sound judgment, and a wise counsellor.
   1. He was straightforward in his suggestions.
   2. He cheerfully respected Moses' authority.
   3. He was a man of noble intentions and high integrity.
      a. He sought nothing for himself.
      b. He desired neither power, favor or riches.
   4. He did not fear giving offense with his counsel.

**III. The Nature of His Observation and Advice to Moses.**

A. He observed that Moses was making a mistake trying to judge all the nation by himself, Ex. 18: 13-14.

B. Moses' single-handed leadership had four flaws.
   1. Moses would soon wear himself out, Ex. 18: 18.
   2. He could not do an adequate job of judging, which penalized the people.
   3. It interfered with his most important duty, which was teaching the people God's Word, Ex. 18: 19-20.
   4. It was denying other good men the privilege to serve, Ex. 18: 20-22.

C. God allowed Moses to accept Jethro's recommendation and integrate it into the government of the nation.

## IV. Lessons to Remember:

A. Let us, like Jethro, hold forth the word of life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, Phil. 2:16.

B. May our homes always be havens of hospitality like Jethro's was, Heb. 13:2.

C. We need to love Christ's kingdom enough that we will gladly send forth our sons and daughters as missionaries to distant lands.

D. As was Jethro, let us be helpers that maintain good works, Tit. 3:14.

E. How great it would be if every young preacher had the privilege to spend time in training under an older experienced servant of God like Jethro.
1. II Tim. 2:2.

F. Today the church needs men of wisdom like Jethro.

   1. Prov. 11:14, "Where no wise guidance is, the people faileth. . . ."

G. Elders today should heed the advice of Jethro and delegate the work of the church to godly men so that it can be properly done.

H. Remember that God had righteous souls among the Gentiles as well as Israel. Both were alike, justified by faith and obedience to the law they were under, Rom. 3:29-30; 2:14.

I. We can always appreciate a godly man who offers sound advice in the spirit of old Jethro.

# JOB, THE SUFFERING SAINT

## Jas. 5:11

INTRO: Things written aforetime are for our learning. (Rom. 15:4). Since every mortal sooner or later faces the problem of suffering, it is a blessing that God left for our study the story of this righteous man Job.

**I. About the Man:**

- A. Job was a real historical person, not a myth or fable.
  - 1. Ezek. 14:14.
  - 2. Jas. 5:11.
- B. His home land was Uz, Job 1:1.
  - 1. Edom.
  - 2. Southeast of Palestine near the Dead Sea.
- C. His Era of Time.
  - 1. The setting is Patriarchal.
  - 2. The father ruled his clan.
  - 3. The religious duties were performed by the father. Job 1:5.
  - 4. There is no hint of Hebrew race, culture or religion.
  - 5. It is generally thought that Job lived before Moses delivered Israel.
- D. His Family, Job 1:2.
  - 1. Seven sons.
  - 2. Three daughters.
  - 3. A wife.
    - a. It is noteworthy that he had but one wife.
    - b. It was an age of polygamy.

    - c. God never commended polygamy.
    - d. He often showed the severe problems it provoked.
- E. His Wealth, Job 1:3.
  - 1. Seven thousand sheep.
    - a. Both wool and meat for home and market.
    - b. Nabal was very great, yet he had only 4,000 sheep and goats, I Sam. 25:2.
  - 2. Three thousand camels.
    - a. Such a large quantity suggests a likely caravan business for hauling merchandise.
  - 3. Five hundred yoke of oxen.
    - a. Oxen were used primarily for plowing.
    - b. Such a huge number indicates a vast farming enterprise.
  - 4. Five hundred she asses.
    - a. Used for transportation and light hauling.
    - b. These would supply his large staff of servants and his family.
- F. His Position and Influence.
  - 1. He was a chieftain over a large territory and family of relatives and workers.
  - 2. He was "greatest of all the children of the east," Job 1:3.
  - 3. He was "a wise man," Job 15:2.
    - a. This meant far more than just brilliant.
    - b. It was an honored title for respected philosophers and counsellers.
  - 4. Job 27:1-11: He was highly respected by his neighbors.
  - 5. Job 29:21-25.

G. His Character, Job 1:1.

1. He was perfect or blameless.
   a. Not sinlessly perfect.
   b. It means whole or complete and describes his spiritual health.
2. He was Upright.
   a. This means straight, not crooked or deceitful.
   b. He was always fair in dealing with his neighbors.
   c. Job 31: 1-12.
3. He feared or reverenced God.
   a. In so doing he would be obedient to every command.
4. He eschewed or turned away from evil.
   a. He hated all sin.
   b. He avoided every appearance of evil.
5. He was sympathetic toward the unfortunate, Job 30:25.
6. He was benevolent to all.
   a. Job 29:11-17.
   b. Job 31:16-20.

H. His Religion.

1. He personally feared God and turned away from evil, Job 1:1.
2. He *continually* led his family in sacrificial worship to God, Job 1:5.
3. Job 19: 25-27.
4. See his great faith even in the storm, Job 13:14-16

## II. His Calamity.

- A. The heavenly controversy, Job 1:6-12.
  - 1. God's pride in Job, 1:8.
  - 2. Satan's accusation, 1:9-11.
    - a. Did Job serve God because of love or for selfish reasons?
  - 3. God's permission to test Job with restriction, 1:12.
- B. The Day of Disaster, Job 1:13-19.
  - 1. Sabeans stole his oxen and asses and killed the keepers, 1:14-15.
  - 2. Fire of God killed his sheep and shepherds, 1:16.
    - a. Lightning.
  - 3. Chaldeans stole his camels and killed their attendants, 1:17.
  - 4. A tornado killed all of his ten children in one sudden blow, 1:18-19.
    - a. Death of a child is a hard blow to any parent.
    - b. Sudden death of the young is worse.
    - c. The loss of all one's offspring would be unbearable.
- C. Job's faithful response and resignation, Job 1:20-22.
  - 1. He mourned his tragic loss.
  - 2. He worshipped his God.
  - 3. He accepted the loss in faith as somehow part of God's plan for his life.
  - 4. He did not sin or say anything unbecoming toward God.

D. The Second Heavenly Hearing, Job 2:1-6.
  1. God's faith in Job confirmed.
  2. Satan boldly dares to ask to afflict Job yet more.
  3. God allows him to do so, but spare his life.

E. The Plague, Job 2:7-8.
  1. Boils may suggest elephantiasis or small-pox.
  2. He is quarantined and driven out of the city.
  3. He sits in the rubbish dump among the ashes.
     a. Literally it reads the dung hill, for there they deposited their night soil.
     b. Also dead animal carcasses were burned there.
     c. Stray dogs inhabit such places.
     d. Flies and insects would be abundant.
     e. The stench would be intense.
  4. So greatly had his appearance been altered that his friends did not even recognize him, 2: 12.
     a. They broke into tears and wept at his plight.
  5. Too poor for a physician, he treated his boils as best he could by scraping them with a piece of broken pottery he picked up from the litter about him.
  6. Job 7: 3-5.
     a. It lasted for months.
     b. He was unable to rest comfortably at all.
     c. His boils ruptured and drained.
     d. Flies laid their eggs upon his wounds.

    7. Job 16: 12b-16.
    8. He cursed the day he was born, 3: 1-3.
    9. He wished he had never been born, 3: 11-13.
    10. He begged to die, 6: 8-9.

## III. Satan Brings Tormenters to Intensify His Pain.

- A. His wife urges him to renounce God and die, Job 2:9.
    1. She completely broke down under the strain and loss.
    2. She suffered all the loss which he did under the first assault.
    3. A man can endure much from a hostile world so long as his mate and home remain a solid refuge. But when that gives way how can he survive?
- B. His three dear and trusted friends.
    1. Eliphaz the Temanite.
    2. Bildad the Shuhite.
    3. Zaphar the Naamathite.
    4. They came to mourn with Job and comfort him.
    5. Because of their erroneous view of why man suffers they become unwitting agents of Satan's attack.
    6. They argued that all suffering is a direct punishment for a person's sin.
        - a. Since Job was suffering horribly, they reasoned he must be guilty of grievous sin, Job 4:7-9.
    7. Over and over again they hammered away at their mistaken theme, driving Job to despair.

        - a. In their determination to maintain their creed they became relentless persecutors, 13:4-5.

- C. The Mental and Spiritual suffering was even more painful than the loss of wealth, children and health.
    - 1. The antagonism of his wife who should have been his staff of help.
    - 2. The attack upon his personal integrity by his dearest friends, 27:5-6.
    - 3. His exclusion from the comforts of his home to the isolation camp outside the city, 19:13-21.
        - a. Even his servants and relatives shunned him.
        - b. They likely feared that the plague might strike them.
    - 4. He was treated with contempt by the townspeople.
        - a. 30:1.
        - b. 30:9-10.
        - c. 30:12-15.
    - 5. The fact that God would not reveal himself to Job or explain why it was happening.
        - a. 13:20-24.
        - b. 23:1-9.
    - 6. The haunting doubts it all raised.
        - a. 6:24.
        - b. 7:17-21.

## IV. The Triumph and Restoration.

- A. Job's realization and repentance, 42:1-6.

    1. He had grown impatient with God.
    2. He had spoken out of turn about things he could not fathom.
    3. His faith now reached a new plateau, 42:5.

B. His friends were rebuked for their ignorant bemeaning of Job, 42:7.

C. Job was accepted by Jehovah, 42:9.
    1. He was vindicated by being allowed to stand as a priest before God with sacrifices for the friends.

D. All of his friends, neighbors and relatives were restored to him, 42:11.

E. His wealth and family were restored, 42:12-13.
    1. His wealth was doubled.
    2. He fathered as many children again.

## V. Lessons to Remember:

A. Piety which depends on prosperity is not genuine.

B. An untested faith is an insufficient faith.

C. God was not trying to break Job's faith, he was trying to validate it.

D. God who graciously gives us all our possessions has the right to take any or all of them away at his pleasure.

E. Suffering is often a mystery but it should never rob us of our faith in God.

F. Prosperity is not necessarily a sign of righteousness and God's acceptance.

G. Nor is suffering proof of sin or God's displeasure.

H. Human wisdom can never fully grasp the depths of God's work and purposes.

I. The vindication of some of God's saints must wait until they stand before his throne.

J. Even the righteous are not without sin. This dross cannot be removed without appropriate refining in the furnace of affliction.

K. He who patiently endures his tribulations will find grace to help and gain a clearer insight into the ways of God.

## Joseph, the Foster-father of Jesus

### Matt. 1:18-21

INTRO: When God chose to send his son into the world, he entrusted the priceless gift to the hands of a young Hebrew couple of Nazareth in Galilee. History has been lavish in its recognition of Mary but Joseph has been largely passed over. Many valuable lessons for God's men can be learned from a study of this noble life.

**I. About the Man:**

A. Descended from King David, Matt. 1:20.
  1. His father's name was Jacob, Matt. 1:16.

B. His home was Nazareth.
  1. Located in northern Palestine, some 65 miles from Jerusalem.
  2. Some 15 miles from both the sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean.
  3. The population of Nazareth was likely 15—20,000.

C. A dependable man: This is evident in that God committed the care of his only son and the world's savior to him.

D. He was quite poor, Lk. 2:7, 22-24.

## II. A Godly Man.

A. He was a righteous man, Matt. 1:19.

B. As a boy his parents would have taught him the Shema, Deut. 6:4.

   1. Every boy learned this at age 4.
   2. They then memorized large portions of the Old Testament.

C. He was a regular worshipper and student at the synagogue at Nazareth.

   1. Lk. 4:16.
   2. The synagogue service consisted of songs, prayers, scripture, readings and preaching.

D. He obeyed God as instructed.

   1. Matt. 1:24.
   2. Matt. 2:13-15.

E. He had his son circumcised according to the Law, Lk. 2:21.

F. Each year they travelled to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival, Lk. 2:41.

G. He gladly paid his taxes to the oppressive Romans, even at great inconvenience to himself and his family, Lk. 2:1-7.

H. Although he could not comprehend the mighty things transpiring, he trusted God and faithfully served him.

## III. A Devoted Husband.

A. He was betrothed to Mary.

   1. In those days engagement was as permanent as marriage.

B. He understood marriage to be the only honorable way for a man and woman to live together, Heb. 13: 4.

C. He wanted a chaste and pure bride for a wife.
   1. When he learned she was pregnant he would have put her away, Matt. 1: 18-19.
   2. So, every man and woman has the right to desire a chaste virtuous mate . . . even today.

D. He was a compassionate man.
   1. He would have put her away privately and not make her a public example, Matt. 1: 19.
   2. Jewish custom was very harsh on the unwed mother.

E. He worked hard to provide for his wife and children, I Tim. 5: 8.

## IV. A Responsible Father to His Children.

A. His children in addition to Jesus: James, Joseph, Simon and Judas and sisters, Matt. 13: 55.

B. He was a foster parent to Jesus.
   1. The neighbors thought Jesus was his son, Lk. 3: 23.
   2. He loved Jesus and raised him as his own.

C. He knew the challenge of raising the extraordinary child, Lk. 2: 40-50.

D. Jesus was subject unto Joseph and Mary, Lk. 2: 51.

## V. The Carpenter of Nazareth.

A. Mk. 6: 3.

B. Joseph saw work as an honorable pursuit for a man. II Thess. 3: 10-12.

C. Hard manual work was not despised.

D. The carpentry trade was hard, gruelling work.

E. He would have taught his trade to his son, Jesus.

   1. Jewish custom expected a man to train his son in a trade. Not to do so was to train him to be a thief.

## VI. His End.

A. He seems to have died prior to Jesus' thirtieth year, since no mention is made of his presence during the public ministry.

B. Jesus asked John to care for Mary at his death, John 19:26-27.

## VII. Lessons to Remember:

A. Every Christian man, young and old, can profit from the godly example of Joseph.

B. We see the importance of the little, unknown people in God's scheme of redemption.

C. Poverty is no incumbrance to serving God.

D. May every male among us never be ashamed to be a faithful worshipper of and servant of God as was Joseph.

E. Let us all respect God's sacred estate of marriage even as did Joseph and Mary.

F. Only in holy marriage are the privileges of sex lawfully enjoyed, Heb. 13:4.

G. We should show the degree of compassion to the unwed mother that Joseph was minded to show Mary.

H. Let us appreciate those parents who love and care for the children of another as if they are his own.

I. It is still honorable to work and earn our living in the sweat of our face, Gen. 3: 19.

J. Let us be sure to teach our children a useful skill that they might make their own way in life.

K. We should pay our taxes and fulfill all other duties to our government, Rom. 13: 6-7.

L. Let us all be people of integrity and dependability that God can use us in his plans.

M. Even when we cannot fathom the plan of God for our lives, let us faithfully trust and obey him.

## JOSEPH

### A Graduate of the School of Hard Knocks

**Ps. 105:9-23**

INTRO: A good life is easier to live if we have good examples to follow. Among the many notable examples God has provided for us, Joseph stands near the top of the list. No finer example of a godly young man facing extreme hardships and yet overcoming, exists.

**I. What We Know About His Early Life.**

A. He was born about 1914 B.C. at Haran, northeast of Damascus.

B. His parents were the patriarch Jacob and his beloved wife Rachel.

  1. Rachel was already dead at the time of our story.

C. His home was polygamous, four wives originally.

D. There were tensions in the home because of this unnatural marriage arrangement.

    1. Envy, hate and harsh talk was seen and heard, Gen. 37:4.

E. There were twelve brothers and one or more sisters in the family.

    1. The older brothers were coarse sinners, Gen. 37:2.

F. Joseph received partial treatment from his father, Gen. 37:3.

    1. This was exhibited in the long-sleeved coat of many colors which he gave him, Gen. 37:3.
        a. This likely meant that he was to be declared the first born or chief heir.
    2. The other brothers hated Joseph because of their father's partiality, Gen. 37:4.

G. This was the unhappy situation in the covenant family which God was forging.

H. Joseph was given to having unusual dreams as a boy, which caused concern in his father and further upset his brethren, Gen. 37:5-11.

I. He was 17 years old when his troubles began.

## II. The Conspiracy, Gen. 37:12-35.

A. The unwise assignment given by Jacob, vs. 13-14.

B. They planned to kill him, vs. 18.

C. Reuben intervened to spare his life, vs. 21-22.

    1. He planned to rescue him later.

D. They cast him into a pit to starve to death, vs. 24.

E. Judah suggests selling him as a slave to a band of Midianite merchants, vs. 25-28.

1. They sold their brother for 20 pieces of silver.

F. They lied to their father, vs. 31-35.

1. They claimed a wild beast had killed Joseph.

**III. Life in Egypt. Tribulation to Triumph. Gen. 37:36, 39:1-41:57.**

A. As a servant in the house of Potiphar.

1. Potiphar was captain of Pharoah's guard, i.e., chief executioner.
2. Jehovah was with Joseph and made everything he did to prosper, 39:2.
3. Potiphar was so impressed he placed Joseph over all his affairs, 39:4-5.
4. The unfortunate episode with Potiphar's wife, 39-6-19.
   - a. He was a handsome young man, 39:6.
   - b. She sought to seduce him, 39:7.
   - c. This was an extremely powerful temptation to Joseph.
     - 1) It appealed to a strong natural appetite.
     - 2) It came in a foreign land, away from the restraints of home.
     - 3) He was young and sexual passions are strongest then.
     - 4) It offered him special benefits in the house if he pleased his mistress.
     - 5) She persisted for many days, 39:10.
   - d. His triumph over temptation was exemplary.
     - 1) His manner of refusal was prompt with no hesitation. I Cor. 6:18.

        - 2) He refused her, firmly yet kindly.
        - 3) Bravery is seen in his refusal. He could easily guess what her reaction would be.
    - e. His reasons for refusing, 39: 8-9.
        - 1) The trust bestowed upon him by his master could not be betrayed.
        - 2) The power and position he held demanded integrity.
        - 3) He respected the wife of his master and the sacredness of marriage.
        - 4) It would be great wickedness and sin against God.
    - f. She falsely accuses him of molesting her, 39: 12-18.
    - g. Potiphar orders him imprisoned, 39: 19-20.

B. Prison Experiences, Gen. 39: 21 — 40: 23.

1. It was possible that Potiphar would have had the authority over the prison, too.
2. He was soon given trusteeship over the other inmates.
    - a. God was with Joseph, 39: 21.
3. The episode of Pharoah's butler and baker, 40: 1-23.
    - a. They each dreamed strange dreams.
    - b. Joseph interpreted them.
    - c. His only request was that the butler seek to gain his freedom from prison when he returned to his post in the royal court, 40: 14-15.
    - d. The dreams came true as Joseph had said.

  - e. The butler forgot Joseph, 40:23.
- 4. Pharoah's dreams, 41:1-36.
  - a. The two dreams of cattle and grain, 41:1-8.
  - b. The butler remembers Joseph at last, 41:9-13.
  - c. Joseph is presented to Pharoah, 41:14-24.
    - 1) Joseph was careful about his personal appearance, 41:14.
    - 2) He gave God the credit for the interpretation, 41:16.
  - d. The interpretation: seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine, 41:25-31.
  - e. Joseph's recommendation: prepare for the famine, 41:32-36.
- 5. Joseph's Exaltation, 41:37-57.
  - a. His appointment as prime minister, 41:37-41.
    - 1) Called Grand Vizer in the East.
  - b. His investiture to office, 41:42-43.
    - 1) The king's signet ring.
    - 2) The royal garments of office.
    - 3) The golden chain, or medal of state.
    - 4) The chariot procession.
  - c. His authority in Egypt, 41:44.
  - d. His new name, Zaph-e-nath-pa-ne'ah.
    - 1) It meant Sustainer of Life.
  - e. He was given a wife, 41:45.
    - 1) As'e-nath

            - a) Meant one belonging to the goddess Neith.
            - b) She was daughter of Potipherah, priest of On.
            - c) The priestly class were the most prominent in Egypt.
            - d) Marriage into this class gave Joseph all its privileges.
        - f. His administration, 4: 46-57.

**IV. Joseph's Reconciliation with the Covenant Family, 42:1-47:31.**

- A. The famine reached Canaan and Jacob's sons were forced to go to Egypt in search of food, 42: 1-5.
- B. Unknowingly they bowed before Joseph, requesting that they might purchase grain, 42: 6-17.
    - 1. Twenty-five years had passed and they did not recognize him.
    - 2. He chided them, calling them spies, 42: 7-9.
    - 3. He detained them three days, then released them, 42: 17.
- C. He made Simeon stay as they returned, 42: 18-25.
- D. They presented Joseph's demand to old Jacob, 42: 26-38.
    - 1. He demanded that they bring Benjamin down, 42: 15.
- E. The brothers returned to Egypt with Benjamin, 43: 11-15.
- F. Again they came before Joseph requesting grain, 43: 16-34.

- G. Joseph plants his cup in Benjamin's sack, 44: 1-34.
  1. The brothers are brought back before Joseph, 44: 1-13.
  2. Judah offers himself as a slave in Benjamin's place, 44: 14-34.
- H. Joseph finally reveals himself to his brothers, 45: 1-28.
  1. The great rejoicing.
  2. He expresses his faith in God's providence, 45: 8.
  3. He is not angry or vindictive.
  4. They return home to prepare to migrate to Egypt, 45: 16-28.
- I. They make the journey successfully and are reunited with Joseph, 46: 1-34.
- J. The family is introduced to Pharoah and given leave to stay in Goshen, a choice area of Egypt, 47: 1-31.

**V. Lessons to Remember:**

- A. Joseph is a worthy example to every young person.
  1. In his obedience to his parents, Eph. 6: 1.
  2. In enduring hardships without becoming bitter, II Tim. 4: 5.
  3. In being trustworthy and diligent, Col. 3: 23.
  4. In his faith in God's providence and guidance.
  5. In withstanding temptations to sin.
  6. In his forgiveness and refusal to hold grudges.
- B. Joseph was a victim of envy, lying, attempts on his life, injustice and ingratitude, yet he saw the

hand of God overruling all of it for his good. Rom. 8:28.

C. If any one of Joseph's misfortunes had been omitted, his good fortune would never have come.

D. As parents, let us not show partiality to our children as did Jacob.

E. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer...", I John 3:15. Hate harbored in the heart needs only an excuse for murder.

F. "... the wrath of man shall praise (God)," Ps. 76: 10. God sees to this.

G. Love to God will always mean hatred from the world's worst element. When the Athenians wearied of hearing Aristides called "the Just" they banished him.

H. The divine choice of the Hebrews was grounded, not on their own merit, but on sovereign purpose.

I. See how much of the world's history and hope has rested upon the faithfulness of a young man or woman.

J. The light of a good man's life shines all the brighter in the dark world of sinful society.

K. Our religion should recommend us to those we deal with, as did Joseph's.

L. "Piety is no hinderance to the right sort of success." Taylor.

M. Acquiescence in our affliction is the first step out of it.

N. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not," Prov. 1: 10.

O. "Flee youthful lusts," II Tim. 2: 22. To debate with moral evil means sure defeat.

P. "It is better to lose a good coat as Joseph did than to lose a good conscience." M. Henry.

Q. Joseph's moral standards did not depend upon his longitude and latitude.

R. "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned," Wm. Congreve.

S. "The deepest humiliation is often the path to the highest exaltation." M. Dods.

T. To return good for evil is God-like;
To return good for good is man-like;
To return evil for evil is beast-like;
To return evil for good is devil-like.

U. No elevation will make a true son forget his reverence for his father.

V. May we remember as did Joseph that all sin is great wickedness against God. Gen. 39:9.

W. Joseph administered the affairs of Egypt with his hands, but Canaan was written on his heart. So should heaven by our chief interest in life.

## THE LAME MAN

### At The Beautiful Gate of the Temple

### Acts 3:1-26

INTRO: When Jesus left for his heavenly throne, he promised his chosen apostles that miraculous signs would accompany them as they went forth preaching, Mk. 16: 17-20. An example of that divine assistance is seen in our reading.

**I. The Cast of Characters:**

A. The Man.

1. He was a Jew.
2. He was a resident of Jerusalem.
3. He was a cripple from birth, Acts 3:2. Now over 40 years old, Acts 4:22.
    a. He suffered from a weakness in his feet and ankle-bones, Acts 3:7.
    b. Notice Luke's medical perception and recording.
4. He was a beggar.
    a. He was a regular sight at the Beautiful Gate of the temple.
    b. He had to be transported by others.
    c. Such beggars are seen throughout the under-developed world, even today.
    d. His social status would have been the lowest.
    e. Often they were treated with contempt.
    f. He would be fortunate to garner a few pennies per day.

B. Peter and John.
1. Apostles of Christ.
2. Men whose Lord had been recently lynched by a howling mob of Jews under instigation of their leaders.
3. Men whose faith had been shaken by the events of his death, Mk. 16:14.
4. They had spent 40 days with their resurrected Lord, Acts 1:3.
5. Peter had quailed with fear when the violence swirled about Jesus. He even denied know-

ing him, Matt. 26:73-74. Now he would face that same mob.

6. They were men with a commission from Christ and,
7. A promise of His heavenly power to assist them, Mk. 16:17-18.
8. They were filled with the Holy Spirit of God which had come upon them on Pentecost Sunday, Acts 2:1-4.
9. They were fresh from the signal victory of that day when 3,000 had been won for the Master.

## II. The Miracle Wrought That Day.

A. The Setting.
  1. At the Beautiful Gate.
    a. Magnificient folding doors, 50 ft. high and 40 ft. wide.
    b. Covered with gold and Corinthian brass.
    c. Also called the gate of Nicanor.
  2. It joined the Court of the Gentiles with the Court of the Women on the east.
  3. The Court of the Gentiles was the largest and busiest court in the temple precinct.
    a. There were visitors, spectators, money changers, merchants selling sacrifices.

B. The Details of the Miracle of Healing:
  1. An undisputed subject.
    a. He was known to all the citizens of Jerusalem.
    b. His affliction was genuine, having prevailed for more than 40 years, Acts 4:22.

   c. His was a condition that could be seen and verified by anyone.
2. He had no previous connections with the men who brought about his cure.
   a. He did not work with or for them.
   b. He did not know them.
   c. He had no inkling as to what was going to happen.
3. There is no indication that the man had "faith" in God to heal him as a prerequisite to being healed.
   a. The faith was in Peter and John.
4. He was healed immediately, Acts 3:7.
   a. There was no time lapse at all.
   b. There were no stages of recovery.
5. He was restored to perfectly sound health.
   a. He walked and leaped before hundreds of witnesses.
6. No medication, medical assistance or therapy were needed at all.
7. The act of healing was performed publicly and conspicuously.
8. No gift was asked for by those whom God used to heal this poor man.
9. That a notable miracle had been performed was undeniable, even to the enemy, Acts 4:16.
10. The gift of healing was not offered to others that day who might have been similarly in need.
11. The purpose of the miracle was like that of a bell that calls men and women to Bible

study. Also, it confirmed the apostle's message as from God, Acts 3:11-13; Mk. 16:17-20.

12. How totally unlike modern claims of faith healing.

## III. The Great Sermon That Was Preached.

A. Christ the son of the Living God, Acts 3: 13a.
   1. Note, he did not preach on miracles, nor encourage people to seek them.

B. He convicted them of their sin of rejecting and killing him, Acts 3: 13b-15.
   1. Even the heathen judge declared his innocence, Acts 3: 13.
   2. They actually preferred a murderer over their Messiah, Acts 3: 14.
   3. They were responsible for killing him, Acts 3: 15a.

C. God had resurrected him from the dead, Acts 3: 15b.
   1. The apostles were eyewitnesses.

D. The power of the resurrected Christ had healed the lame man, Acts 3: 16.

E. The challenge to submission, Acts 3: 17-26.
   1. Their ignorance mitigated, but did not excuse, Acts 3: 17.

F. Repent and turn again, Acts 3: 19.
   1. Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus, Acts 2: 38.
   2. That seasons of refreshing may come from the Lord.

        - a. For remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:38.
    - 3. Obedience is essential, Acts 3:22-23.

**IV. The Response to the Sermon, Acts 4:1-4.**

- A. The temple authorities, being Sadducees, were angered at their talk of a resurrection, Acts 4:1-2.
- B. The apostles were arrested and thrown in jail, Acts 4:3.
- C. Many that heard believed, Acts 4:4.
    - 1. The number of the men came to be about 5,000.
    - 2. Probably women and children were in addition.

**V. Lessons to Remember:**

- A. He asked for a small gift and received undreamed of blessings. God blesses his children.
- B. Peter was not ashamed to say silver and gold have I none. Nor should we.
- C. Spiritual things are far more valuable to the poor than purely material goods.
- D. There is room in the Lord's kingdom for the poor. Is there room in our congregation, or personal lives?
- E. Think how many good deeds we can do for the Lord and humanity even though we have no silver or gold.
- F. How vast is the difference between the apostolic miracles of healing to those done today!
- G. Crimes and sins of ignorance are no less sins that must be accounted for to God.

H. When we learn of our sins, we must repent and turn.

I. We are reminded of the purpose of miracles.
   1. To attract attention of the lost.
   2. To verify and confirm the words of the apostles.

J. We see the Christ the prophets predicted.

K. We learn that we must harken unto Christ in all things or be destroyed.

L. We see the angry response of sinners to the gospel.

M. We see how the church grows when the gospel is faithfully preached.

## LAZARUS

### A Man Whom Jesus Loved

### John 11:1-46

INTRO: One of the most beautiful and soul-thrilling episodes of the ministry of Jesus is presented by John the apostle. The lessons connected with the raising of Lazarus are inexhaustible.

**I. About the Man.**

A. His name, Lazarus, in Hebrew, Eleazar.
   1. It meant, "God is my help."

B. His sisters were Mary and Martha.

C. His home was at Bethany.
   1. Located approximately 2 miles from Jerusalem, on the east slope of the Mount of Olives.

    2. Their home was a prosperous one, John 12: 1-5.
    3. Their home was a haven of hospitality for the Savior who had no home of his own, Lk. 10: 38-42.

D. Lazarus and his sisters were disciples.

E. He was quiet and retiring for no other mention of him is made than this. Had he not died, we would never have known of him.

F. Jesus loved him, John 11: 3. What greater honor or recommendation could be heaped upon any man?

G. He was striken by some fatal condition that brought him speedy death.

**II. Jewish Funeral and Burial Customs of that day.**

A. They did not embalm.

B. Burial followed soon after death.

C. The body was bathed and perfumed then wrapped in long strips of white linen cloth. Aromatic spices were wrapped in the clothes. The head and hands were wrapped separately.

D. Burials were very costly because of the forementioned practice and the gifts and treasures buried with the deceased.

E. Burial was most often in a cave or tomb carved from soft rock with a large flat round stone rolled over the mouth.

    1. Many tombs would contain space for eight bodies.

F. There were seven days of intense mourning for the dead.

    1. Mourners did not anoint themselves or groom themselves.
    2. No work, business or study was done.
    3. No food was prepared in the house, nor was any food eaten in the presence of the deceased.
    4. Thirty days of lighter mourning followed the first week.
- G. Professional mourners were hired to show the family's sorrow.
    1. Loud wailing and demonstrations of grief were expected.
    2. The deeds and virtues of the deceased were spoken of and mourned.

## III. Jesus' Response to Human Sorrow.

- A. He saw man's sickness to be for the glory of God, John 11:4.
- B. He saw death as but a sleep, John 11:11-13.
- C. He saw Lazarus' death as a blessing for the disciples whose faith would be strengthened by his resurrection, John 11:14-15.
    1. Also they would be better prepared for his own imminent death.
- D. He came to the need of Mary and Martha.
    1. He was concerned and sympathetic.
- E. He groaned in his spirit and was troubled, i.e., was indignant, John 11:33.
    1. Perhaps at the exaggerated wailing of the mourners.
    2. At the awful sorrow and pain experienced by the sisters of the deceased.

    3. At the curse of death which had inflicted this humiliation upon his friend and his family.
    4. Perhaps because he was going to have to bring Lazarus back to this vale of tears . . . and yes, to die yet again.
  - F. He saw death as already defeated in view of his impending death and resurrection.
    1. John 11:23-26.
    2. I Cor. 15:54-57.
  - G. He saw it as a time to weep, John 11:35-38.
    1. Our high priest can be touched with our infirmities, Heb. 4:14-16.
  - H. He saw it as a time to call upon God and give him the glory, John 11:41-43.

**IV. The Unprecedented Miracle, 11:43-44.**

- A. Others had been raised, but they were not so hopeless situations.
- B. Decay had already set in, John 11:39.
- C. It foretold two great things.
  1. Jesus' own resurrection after three days in the tomb.
  2. Our resurrection at his coming, I Cor. 15:20-23.

**V. The Response Evoked.**

- A. Many who witnessed it believed on Jesus, John 11:45.
- B. Others reported it to the enemies, John 11:46.
- C. The Sanhedrin decided that this was the final straw, Jesus must die, for all men seemed to be going after him, John 11:47-53.

D. The high-priest even sought to kill Lazarus to destroy the evidence of Christ's power, John 12:9-11.

## VI. Lessons to Remember.

A. We must learn to open our homes to God's children.

B. God can always bring good out of evil.

C. A sickness, even a death, can be to the glory of God.

D. Our dead who die in the Lord are "only asleep."

E. The Christian is freed from the fear of death.

1. He looks at it as rest from labor.
2. He regards it as a state of refreshment and renewal.
3. He remembers that death has an appointed end.

F. Death is friendly to the friends of Jesus.

G. Jesus is our friend to help us in joy or in sorrow. We can call upon him.

H. His tears show us:

1. His deep sympathy with our sorrow.
2. The expression of his strong and genuine friendship.
3. His thorough humanity. He was one of us.
4. His divine compassion.

I. We see such power as only God could have. Our Lord is God, John 1:1.

J. If he raised Lazarus he will raise us in the last day, John 5:28-29.

K. We see the extremes that unbelief will go to justify itself: Destroy the proof of their error.

## LEGION, THE GERASENE DEMONIAC

### Lk. 8:26-39

INTRO: The gospel writers chose events from Jesus' life to establish his claim to deity. Our text is one of the most gripping of these vignettes. It demonstrates Christ's power even over the evil powers of the spiritual world, including the prince of demons, Beelzebub. Following a busy day of teaching and healing of the sick, Jesus and the disciples entered a small boat and departed for the east shore of the Sea of Galilee. They landed on the other side at a place called Gerasa or Gadara, a small town of the district called *The Decapolis,* i.e., the ten cities, a section of Palestine populated mainly by Greeks and Romans in that day.

**I. The Man Jesus Met.**

A. His name: Legion.

1. A Legion was a Roman military unit of 6,000 men.
2. This name had been given him because of his pitiful condition, dominated by many demons.

B. His problem:

1. He was possessed by a great number of demons.
2. Demons were evil spirits which were under Satan's control, and used by him to torment unfortunate victims of humanity.

3. It seems that God allowed them to have a limited freedom upon the earth in those days that His son's power over evil might be shown to be complete.
    a. Matt. 12: 28-29.
    b. Lk. 10: 17-18.

C. His condition:
1. He had lost the right use of his mind, Mk. 5: 15.
2. He was wild and fierce.
3. He terrorized those about him, Matt. 8: 28.
4. He harmed himself, Mk. 5: 5.
5. He had been chained and under guard, Lk. 8: 29.
6. He was unnaturally powerful, Mk. 5:4.
7. He was naked, Lk. 8: 27.
8. He was constantly crying out even as a beast.
9. He was alienated from friends, family and society.
10. He lived in the burial tombs with others who were similarly afflicted, Lk. 8: 27.
11. He was under control of a foreign, alien power.
    a. "We find in the demoniac the sense of a bondage in which he does not acquiese, of his true life absolutely shattered, of an alien power which has mastered him wholly and is now cruelly lording over him and ever further drawing away from Him in whom only any created intelligence can find rest and peace. ...another is ruling

in the high places of his soul, and hast cast down the rightful lord from his seat . . . there goes forth from him a cry of redemption. . ." Trench.

12. Until Christ appeared, his situation seemed hopeless.
13. He was as a living dead man, damned already.

D. His plea:

1. "When he saw Jesus . . . he ran and worshipped him."
2. "What have I to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, torment me not." Mk. 5:6-7.
    a. We see a mixed sentiment in this plea.
        1) The victim pleading for merciful deliverance.
        2) The demons voicing their fear of the Savior.

**II. Jesus' conversation with the demons.**

A. "He was commanding the unclean spirit to come out," Lk. 8:29.

B. "They entreated him that he would not command them to depart into the abyss," Lk. 8:31.

1. Lk. 11:24-26. The demons desired any kind of a host body than to be returned to Satan's abode.

C. They entreated him that he would give them leave to enter into the herd of many swine, Lk. 8:32.

1. Notice that they recognized who Jesus was.
2. They recognized his complete power over them.

    3. They could do nothing without his permission.
  - D. "He gave them leave," Lk. 8:32.

**III. The Great Deliverance and its Consequences:**

- A. The demons came out from the man and entered into the swine (about 2,000 in number), Lk. 8:33.
- B. "The herd rushed down the steep into the lake, and were drowned," Lk. 8:33.

**IV. The Various Effects of the Miracle upon the Different Parties:**

- A. The swine went berserk and destroyed themselves. The demons were again without a host.
- B. The swineherders fled to the city with the report.
- C. Legion was instantly restored to his sanity.
  1. He was immediately clothed.
  2. He was in his right mind.
  3. He was sitting at the feet of Jesus, receiving instruction, Lk. 8:35.
- D. The Townspeople.
  1. "They were afraid," Lk. 8:35.
  2. "All the people of the country of the Gerasenes ... asked him to depart," Lk. 8:37.
  3. Here we see human selfishness at its worst. They were more concerned for their lost property than for poor Legion's deliverance.
  4. When people prefer wealth to humanity, Christ will not tarry long with them.

**V. Christ's Departure and Legion's Request, Lk. 8:37-39.**

- A. Christ bowed to their wishes and prepared to leave. He will not force himself upon any people.

B. Legion begged to go with him.
    1. Perhaps he feared a return of the demons in Christ's absence.
    2. Perhaps he asked out of gratitude and desire to serve.

C. Christ commissioned him to "go and tell how great things the Lord hath done for thee and how he had mercy on thee," Mk. 5:19.

D. He was told to go to his family and friends.
    1. He went through the whole Decapolis of ten cities publishing his good news.
    2. And all men marvelled, Mk. 5:20.

**VI. Lessons to Remember:**

A. We see the cruelty of Satan as a master over men.

B. Like Legion, may we come bowing before and worshipping Jesus.

C. Christ is a loving savior of man, not a tormentor.

D. It was Christ's special mission to destroy the works of the devil and free men.

E. We should have the greatest pity for those whose lives Satan has ruined.

F. No matter how powerful the forces of evil, they cannot stand before Christ.

G. Demons could not hurt so much as a pig without heaven's permission.

H. The salvation of a soul may involve the destruction of property or loss of income to some: i.e., sinful jobs or careers, or businesses which must be given up.

I. May we never be like the men of Gadara who valued material things more than the welfare of a man.

J. When people prefer property to people, they will want to be rid of Christ.

K. Those who choose to remain in their sins find the presence of Jesus intolerable.

L. God sometimes grants the requests of sinners to their own hurt as He did the men of Gadara.

M. He sometimes refuses the requests of the righteous for their own good and that of His kingdom.

N. Like Legion, God sends us to tell our family, friends and neighbors what He has done for us.

O. Jesus did not force himself upon the Gerasenes nor will he force himself upon you, Rev. 3:20.

## MARY MAGDALENE, THE MALIGNED DISCIPLE

### Mk. 16:9-10

INTRO: Of the many people whose names are recorded in the Bible, few have been so slandered and maligned as Mary Magdalene. Though the record of her is brief, it reveals to us a woman of great faith, courage and loyalty toward Jesus.

**I. About our subject:**

A. She was from the village of Magdala on the southwestern coast of the Sea of Galilee.

1. Hence her name, Mary Magdalene.

B. She was a woman of financial means for she ministered to Jesus and his apostles for her substance, Lk. 8:2-3.

C. She appears to have been an unmarried woman without home duties, for she travelled with Jesus' band.

D. She had been possessed of seven demons.

   1. Demons were evil spirits under Satan's control which were able to possess the minds and bodies of humans.
   2. It seems that God allowed Satan this power when Christ and his apostles were on the earth in order that they might demonstrate the fact that God was with them in their mission.
   3. *Seven* demons indicates that she was completely under Satan's domain.

E. Jesus had cast the demons out of her, thus saving her from Satan's dominion and the awful symptoms of possession.

F. Mary was with Jesus from the cross to the tomb. Matt. 27:55-56, 61.

G. Jesus appeared to Mary first following his resurrection, Mk. 16:9-10.

H. She was the first person commissioned to go and announce the resurrection of Christ, Matt. 28:1-8.

I. Mary was a leader of those women who followed Jesus.

   1. She is mentioned by name 14 times, in 8 of those she is named first, which implies leadership.

## II. The Ugly Rumor.

A. For centuries men have said she was a reformed prostitute.

B. This was based on a misunderstanding and confusion of personalities, in the episode of the sinful woman who washed Jesus' feet, Lk. 7: 36-50.

C. The Catholic church has long taught this.

D. Artists and poets have perpetuated this error.

E. Her name is commonly given to homes for unwed mothers.

F. This slanderous theory is totally unfounded.

G. It not only dishonors Mary, but Jesus as well, since he allowed her to travel with his group.

H. Infidelic Liberals have dared to suggest that Jesus and Mary were paramours. So also the play *"Jesus Christ Super Star."*

**III. The Message of Mary Magdalene's Life.**

A. We see the power of Satan to enslave the soul.
   1. II Cor. 4:4, He blinds men's eyes to the gospel.
   2. I Pet. 5:8, He is as a raging lion.
   3. Col. 1:13, A cruel tyrant, enslaving men.

B. We see the cleansing, saving power of Jesus.
   1. Matt. 9:10-13.
   2. Lk. 19:10.
   3. I Tim. 1:15-16.

C. The remembrance of past, pardoned sins helps to keep us close to Christ.
   1. It reminds us of past misery and shame.
   2. It reminds us of the joy of new salvation.
   3. It keeps us clinging to Jesus for daily help and continuing salvation.

D. We see the beauty of a dedicated service to the Lord.
   1. Eph. 6:5-8.
   2. John 12:26.

E. We see the courage and loyalty of Mary. Last at the cross, first at the tomb.
   1. I John 4:18.

F. We see how even the most degraded can upon true conversion rise to the forefront of discipleship with Jesus.
   1. I Tim. 1:15-16.

**IV. Lessons to Remember:**

A. There is no condition of human misery which Christ cannot alleviate.

B. None is sunk so deep in sin but that Christ can redeem them.

C. No one is so bad as to be excluded from the purpose of his death.

D. The Savior has power over Satan, as he delivered Mary, so can he deliver us from his evil control. Dan. 3:17.

E. Consider the makeup of the early disciples: a cured demoniac, a penitent thief, a changed tax collector, a reformed harlot, a former political radical, a converted violent persecutor, a rough Roman jailor. I Cor. 1:26.

F. There will be in heaven some of the worst sinners that ever walked this earth, but they will be redeemed, transformed sinners.

G. Like Mary, we should always be anxious to minister to the cause of Jesus and his workers at every opportunity, Gal. 6: 10.

H. Mary could only stand by helpless at the cross, but what comfort her presence must have been to Jesus. So we should stand by our friends in their hour of suffering.

I. We see the honor bestowed on Mary for her faithfulness and through her to all womankind. He appeared first unto Mary.

J. We note the beauty, power and influence of a spoken name. Let us all know each other enough to greet each one by name.

K. Jesus was Mary's Rabboni (Lord), so he must be ours, too, Rom. 10: 9.

L. We must not cling to Jesus or any lesser thing when the Master has a job for us, John 20: 17.

M. Women can still go and tell others of the resurrected Christ as did Mary and yet not become "women preachers," I Tim. 2: 12.

N. We should never forget what Christianity owes to women or what women owe to Christianity.

O. May we never be guilty of slandering the name or character of any soul on earth. Rather, may we protect their reputation and rebuke those who do.

# MELCHIZEDEK

## PRIEST OF GOD MOST HIGH

### Gen. 14:14-20

INTRO: One of the most mysterious characters in the Holy Record is Melchizedek. A great deal of confusion and speculation has swirled around this great man. We are anxious to study about him since he is such a glorious and important person. The light of correct Bible knowledge will disperse most of the confusion about his life and ministry.

**I. About the Man:**

- A. The time of the event was about 2085 B.C.
- B. His home was the ancient city of Salem, Jerusalem. Gen. 14: 18.
- C. He was a Canaanite, a Gentile.
    - 1. The early residents of Jerusalem were the Jebusites, Jos. 15: 63.
    - 2. Although he was a Canaanite and lived among them, he was far from them in his religion and morals.
        - a. He was righteous, they were wicked.
        - b. He served God Most High, they served idols. Gen. 14: 18.
- D. His family.
    - 1. Nothing is known of his parents or descendants.
    - 2. Heb. 7:3, "Without father and mother, with-out genealogy." The last phrase explains the first.
    - 3. He did not inherit his office nor leave it to an heir.

E. He was King of Salem.

   1. Salem means peace, thus Paul says he was King of Peace. Heb. 7:2.

F. He was a priest of God, Gen. 14:18.

   1. The Latin work for priest is *pontifex* which literally means a bridge builder. He builds bridges between God and man.
   2. He is the first man in the Bible who was called priest.
   3. He was a priest of God Most High, El Elyon.

G. Speculations About Melchizedek.

   1. Origen said he was an angel.
   2. Hieracas said he was the Holy Spirit.
   3. The Melchizedecians said he was the Divine Power.
   4. Ambrose said he was Christ.
   5. The ancient Jewish Targums said he was Shem.

## II. Melchizedek's Priesthood.

A. He was a priest "made like unto the Son of God." Heb. 7:3. He foreshadowed the priesthood of Christ.

B. He was a universal priest, his ministry was not limited to one race, or nation. He the Canaanite priest blessed Abram the Shemite.

C. His was a priesthood of righteousness.

   1. His life glowed like a brilliant star in the heathen darkness of the Canaanite pagans. Even their religion was coarse, vulgar and cruel.
   2. Compare the godly man with the king of Sodom who was there that same day.

D. His priesthood was a royal priesthood.
   1. He was both king and priest. Gen. 14: 18.
   2. This the Aaronic priests could never be for the priests were of Levi and the kings of Judah's tribe. Heb. 7: 14.
   3. Uzziah had tried to unite the throne and the altar and was smitten with leprosy, II Chron. 26: 16-21.

E. His priesthood was based upon his personal character and standing before God.
   1. His did not depend upon inheritance or genealogy.
   2. Heb. 7: 3.

F. His priesthood was superior to all other human orders of priests.
   1. Because it was prior to all others in time.
   2. It was superior in dignity because:
      a. Abram, the father of the Hebrew Nation and of Levi himself, paid respect to him and gave him tithes.
      b. Heb. 7: 4-6, 9-10.
      c. He blessed Abram, and "without dispute the less is blessed of the better." Heb. 7: 7.
   3. It was superior because of duration.
      a. His priesthood was non-transferable, inviolable. Heb. 7: 24.

G. He was a mediator between God and man.
   1. He was a sharer in humanity with those he represented before God; not an angel.
   2. He could convey God's blessings upon man.

## III. What Melchizedek Did That Day, Gen. 14:17-19.

A. He refreshed Abram by bringing bread and wine following his gruelling battle and march.

   1. We see his generous benevolence and hospitality.

B. He blessed Abram.

C. He gave God the credit and glory for the victory Abram had won.

D. He cheered and encouraged Abram in service to God.

## IV. Lessons to Remember.

A. Our Lord Jesus is a king and a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Heb. 7:17.

B. Men in every age need a priest to stand between them and God. We are most fortunate to have God's son as our high priest. I Tim. 2:5.

C. Let us like Melchizedek be righteous servants of God even in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Phil. 2:15.

D. Like Melchizedek, let us all show kindness to the servants of God. Matt. 25:40.

E. The priesthood of Christ is far superior to that of the Mosaic system. Let us be grateful for our Lord and the Christian way.

F. Thank God that we are able to serve as royal priests under the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ. I Pet. 2:5, 9.

G. We see that true religion and faithfulness to God was not limited exclusively to Abraham and his descendants. Godly Gentiles were to be found.

H. Let us serve God Most High as did Melchizedek and bless those we come in contact with.

I. May we, like him, be men and women of peace, Matt. 5: 9.

## METHUSELAH

### The Grandfather of Noah

### Gen. 5:21-29

INTRO: Gen. 5: is often passed over as a dull, uninteresting chapter of sacred history. What do we know of men such as Enosh, Kenan or Mahalalel? Folks read of Methuselah and remember but one thing, his great age. Yet comparative study reveals a good bit more worth noting.

**I. Facts About Methuselah's Life.**

A. All we know of the man is found in these short verses.

B. His godly father.

  1. Enoch walked with God, Gen. 5: 24.
  2. God translated Enoch, sparing him death because of his great faith, Heb. 11: 4-6.

C. His name means "man of the weapon."

D. His contemporaries.

  1. Although he was of the eighth generation of men,
  2. Adam would probably yet be alive. He lived to be 930 years old.
  3. He would have known Noah and his sons.

E. He was married and the father of many children.

    1. His most illustrious son was Lamech, the father of Noah.

F. His religious life.
    1. He stands in that stream of righteous humanity known as "the sons of God," Gen. 6:2.
    2. He was among those that "called upon the name of Jehovah," Gen. 4:26.
        a. That is, they openly worshipped God in a formal way.

G. The society in which he lived.
    1. It was daily growing ever more degenerate and corrupt.
    2. He was in the unique position of viewing the river of humanity from its inception to its death by pollution.
        a. What a depressing society it must have been.
    3. His world was daily growing more violent and corrupt.
        a. Gen. 6:5.
    4. The family of the righteous was shrinking in numbers and being engulfed in ungodliness.
    5. A major cause was the inter-marriage of Seth's righteous descendents with Cain's godless posterity. Gen. 6:2-3.

H. His Long Life.
    1. 969 years.
    2. He still holds the record for longevity in *Guiness Book of Records.*

I. His Death.
    1. It appears that he died in the year of the flood.

        2. Life must have grown sad and depressing in the face of such decadence.
        3. Only Noah and his family were left to face the world and its impending doom on righteous ground.
    J. He was an ancestor of our Lord Jesus. Lk. 3:37.
        1. He did not live his godly life in vain.

**II. The World That was . . . Prior to the Great Deluge.**
    A. A semi-tropical paradise.
    B. Both men and creatures lived to a great age.
    C. All things were larger than now.
    D. Many more species of animal life existed then than now.
    E. The cause may have been a great canopy of vapor enshrouding the earth from creation to the flood.
        1. Gen. 1:6-7, waters above the firmament.
        2. Gen. 2:5-6, no rainfall, a mist watered the earth.
        3. This would explain why Noah's warning of a flood fell on unbelieving ears.
        4. There would have been a static-controlled environment with little or no variation.
            a. No violent winds or storms.
        5. The deadly ultra violet rays of the sun would have been deflected around the earth.
            a. It is now thought that these rays are a chief cause of aging.
        6. When the flood came "the windows of heaven" were opened, Gen. 7:11-12.
            a. This may refer to the breaking up of this water canopy.

7. If so, this would explain the vast amount of water necessary for a global flood.
8. Also, it would account for the immediate sharp decline of age following the flood.

F. It was no primitive caveman society.
   1. Gen. 4: 16-24.
   2. The things mentioned here speak of a highly developed social order.

G. Godly men and women were vegetarians before the flood, Gen. 9: 3.

H. It was a well populated world.
   1. If each couple had given birth to only ten children in ten generations the population would be over 2 million.
   2. If they averaged 20 children it would have been in excess of 2 billion.

## III. Lessons to Remember:

A. Thank God for godly parents like Enoch who daily walked with God before his children.

B. When God's children marry the children of the world, degeneration often occurs, II Cor. 6: 14.

C. It is strange what makes a man memorable. Being a good marriage partner, parent, citizen is not noteworthy. But living to be 969 years is.

D. Methuselah's greatest achievement was in keeping the torch of faith alive and passing it along to his posterity.

E. What joy Methuselah must have felt in seeing his grandson and great-grandchildren chosen to bear the plant of humanity through the destruction of the flood and plant it safe on the other side.

F. Remember that life is more than long years:
  1. Length—is really not so important, Jas. 4: 14.
  2. Breadth—how wide is our influence and interests.
  3. Heighth—what spiritual goals and ambitions do you have.
  4. Depth—how deep are your roots? How deep is your committment? How deep is your thinking and study?
    a. Lk. 6: 47-49.

G. A saint can maintain his faith and loyalty to God even though the whole world is given over to sin.

H. If we live ten years or many, may they all be spent in loyalty to the Savior, Eccle. 12: 1.

I. May we die the death of the righteous, Num. 23: 10.

## MICHAEL AND THE ANGELS

### Rev. 12:7-9

INTRO: One of the most exciting and fascinating topics in all of God's Book is that of angels. Few topics are so misunderstood and there is widespread ignorance on the subject. Unbelievers and modernists scoff at the very idea. But believing saints find great comfort and consolation in the fact of their existence. There are 273 references to angels in God's Book.

**I. What does the word "angel" mean?**

A. One who bears a message.

B. Rev. 22: 6: "The Lord . . . sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must . . . come to pass."

## II. What is the origin of angels?

A. They are created beings, Col. 1: 16-17.

B. Being created, they are not eternal, though they seem to be immortal.

C. Angels are not departed saints, Acts 2: 34.

## III. When were angels created?

A. Not during the six days of creation, for they are not listed with the other things created.

B. Job 38: 4-7.

C. II Pet. 2: 4. Rebellious angels had been cast out of heaven. But Satan their leader was found in Eden soon after creation. Evidently he was created prior to that time.

## IV. How many Angels Are There?

A. Dan. 7: 10, ten thousand times ten thousand.

B. Matt. 26:53, "More than twelve legions," 72,000 (see p. 115) plus.

C. Heb. 12: 22, "Innumerable hosts of angels."

## V. What is the Appearance of Angels?

A. Most often they appear as men.

1. Gen. 19: 1.
2. Mk. 16: 5, "A young man."
3. Heb. 13: 1, they are often mistaken for human beings.
    - a. No wings or halos.

B. In their natural state they are *invisible* to the unaided human vision.
   1. Num. 22:31, Balaam.
   2. Elisha and Gehazi, II Kings 6:15-17.

C. They may take any form which God chooses.
   1. II Kings 6:17, horses and chariots of fire.
   2. Ex. 3:2, the burning bush.

## VI. What are their Attributes and their Nature?

A. Angels are wise and intelligent.
   1. I Pet. 1:12.
   2. Not all-wise, Matt. 24:36.

B. Not omnipresent.
   1. Angels went to Shem, Gen. 18:22.
   2. They had to go to a place when it was necessary for them to be there.
   3. Rev. 14:6, an angel flying in mid-heaven.

C. They are powerful, but not omnipotent.
   1. Matt. 28:2.
   2. II Sam. 24:16, power to destroy.

D. They are holy, Mk. 8:38.

E. Though holy, they are not to be worshipped.
   1. Rev. 22:8-9.

F. They are responsible to obey God's will.
   1. Ps. 103:20.
   2. II Pet. 2:4, they can sin.

G. Angels do not marry.
   1. Matt. 22:30.
   2. They have personality and names, i.e., Gabriel, Michael.

## VII. What is the Mission and Work of the Angels?

- A. They glorify God.
  - 1. Rev. 5: 11-12.
- B. They minister unto and watch over God's children.
  - 1. Matt. 4: 11.
  - 2. Lk. 22: 43.
  - 3. They came in answer to prayers.
    - a. Acts 12:7.
    - b. Dan. 9: 20-23.
  - 4. They protect the righteous, Ps. 91: 11.
    - a. Ps. 34: 7.
  - 5. Heb. 1: 14.
  - 6. Matt. 18: 10.
- C. They are God's providential agents in governing the affairs of the world.
  - 1. Rev. 7: 1.
  - 2. Dan. 9: 13, 20-21.
- D. They are God's agents to punish the wicked.
  - 1. Acts 12: 23.
  - 2. II Chron. 32: 21-22.
- E. They escort the souls of the dead to the Hadean realm.
  - 1. Lk. 16: 22.
- F. They will be employed in judgment.
  - 1. I Thess. 4: 16.
  - 2. II Thess. 1: 7.
  - 3. Matt. 13: 41.

**VIII. What is their destiny?**

A. Rev. 7:9-13, the holy angels.

B. Matt. 25:41, the devil's angels.

CONCLUSION: The angels of heaven watch for the repentance of lost men and women and rejoice at their salvation. They then aid and assist every righteous soul in their endeavor to be faithful unto death. Will you not give them cause to celebrate in heaven your repentance, this very hour?

## NADAB AND ABIHU

### Partners in Presumption

### Lev. 10:1-2

INTRO: The first day of Aaron's new ministry had not yet closed. He had offered the various sacrifices and entered the holy place with Moses. Returning to the court, he blessed the people. He witnessed the Lord's approval of the people, the priesthood and the sacrifice by the fire sent forth from heaven. But a rash act on the part of two of his sons, Nadab and Abihu, turned the joy into mourning and humiliation.

**I. About our Subjects:**

A. Their father was Aaron, great leader of and first high-priest of the nation. Their mother was Elisheba.

B. Moses, the mighty man of God, was their uncle.

C. They were brothers to Eleazar and Ithamar.

D. They were born in Egypt and grew up there in bondage.

E. They witnessed the awful plagues that God sent upon Egypt.

F. They followed Moses through the Red Sea's dry bed.

G. They saw the manifestations of God upon Sinai.

H. They had eaten manna and quail and drank water from the rock which God had miraculously supplied.

I. Because Aaron, their father, was chosen high-priest they were privileged to share in the priesthood for the nation. There were only five priests.

J. They had spent the last eight days in the courtyard of the tabernacle undergoing their consecration and dedication ritual for the priesthood.

K. They were young men, not yet fathers, Num. 3: 4.

**II. Reconstruction of the events leading to the tragedy.**

A. Lev. 8: 1-9, the first day of the consecration service.

B. Lev. 8: 31-36, the sacred feast and the seven days of waiting in the tabernacle court.

C. Lev. 9: 1, 7-9, 12, 18, the many sacrifices of the eighth and final day of dedication.

D. Lev. 9: 22-24, the Lord acknowledges and accepts their service by fire sent from heaven.

E. Lev. 10: 1, the rash and foolish deed of Nadab and Abihu.

F. Lev. 10: 2, their dreadful punishment, death by fire.

G. Lev. 10: 3, Moses interprets the event.

H. Lev. 10: 4-5, their burial.

I. Lev. 10: 6-7, Aaron and his other sons are forbidden to mourn for their kin.

J. Lev. 10: 8-11, the surviving priests are warned against the danger of strong drink. This likely contributed to Nadab and Abihu's downfall.

## III. What was the Strange Fire?

A. Any fire other than that which God authorized, 10: 2.

   1. He commanded the use of the fire from the brazen altar, Lev. 16: 12-13.

B. They likely took coals from the fires near the door of the tent where the sacrificial meat was prepared for eating, Lev. 8: 31.

C. In worshipping God, man is limited to that which God has authorized, anything else is sin.

   1. I Cor. 4: 6.
   2. Matt. 28: 20.
   3. Rev. 22: 18-19.

## IV. Why did they do such a foolish thing?

A. Perhaps they acted from "festive indulgence." The excitement of the occasion caused them not to think seriously of the consequences.

B. Perhaps they had imbibed strong drink and their judgment was clouded, Lev. 10: 8-11.

C. Perhaps it was the result of hasty judgment and ill-conceived ideas about God and worship.

D. It might have been a case of will-worship, Col. 2: 20-23.

E. It could have been deliberate disobedience, Deut. 17: 12.

## V. Why did God punish them so severely?

A. Sin was publicly committed, Rom. 6:23.
B. They were men of high position.
C. They enjoyed great privilege.
D. They possessed much light and knowledge.
E. The act was a deliberate violation of a known law, I Cor. 4:6; Deut. 17:12.
F. It was daringly done in the temple before God and man.
G. It condemned them there in the eyes of all Israel.
H. It declared the "exceeding sinfulness" of sin.
I. It stressed the exacting demands and exalted dignity of God's law.
J. It no doubt convinced thousands of others not to trifle with the law of God, thus sparing them a similar fate.

## VI. Lessons to Remember:

A. Their judgment is a warning for all young leaders not to tamper with God's sacred things.
B. Satan seeks to corrupt young incautious leaders to lead the church astray.
C. Elevation to high and holy positions does not place men beyond temptation and liability to commit sin.
D. Attendance at God's altar is no proof of true worship.
E. Very much of what passes among men for worship is but strange fire before God. Instrumental music, images, beads, incense, choirs, women preachers, traditions.

F. Not only must we obey God's moral precepts, but also his positive laws concerning faith and worship.

G. God accepts only what he authorizes in religion, I Sam. 15:22.

H. Increase of privilege subjects one to greater responsibility and heavier judgment for misconduct, Jas. 3:1.

I. Honor is too much for some minds. It intoxicates them and makes them reckless.

J. None of God's children should touch strong drink so that they can always discern between the clean and unclean.

K. God will be sanctified in those who come nigh to to Him, either by obedience or punishment.

L. God will punish presumptuous sinners who choose their own method of worshipping and serving God.

M. The right God, right place, right altar, right incense and right priests were nullified by the wrong fire.

N. The same fire that consumed Aaron's sacrifice, showing God's approval, devoured his sons in disapproval, Heb. 12:29.

## NEBUCHADNEZZAR

### A King Who Learned Humility the Hard Way

### Dan. 4:1-37

INTRO: One of the most important names in ancient history is that of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. No Gentile king affected the chosen people as did this man. Our knowledge of the Old Testament is not complete without a study of his life. Some 500 clay tablets, 30 monuments and numerous ancient writers supplement the Bible record of his life.

## I. About the Man.

- A. His father was Nabopalassar, founder of the Empire.
- B. Date of Nebuchadnezzar's birth, 650 (?) B.C.
- C. His younger brother was Nabu-shum-lishir.
- D. His Wives.
  - 1. Amytis, daughter of Astyages, king of Media.
    - a. They were married in 625 B.C.
    - b. To seal an alliance between their fathers.
  - 2. Nictoris, an Egyptian woman.
- E. His sons.
  - 1. Evil-Merodach, who succeeded him as king.
  - 2. Marduk-shumsur.
  - 3. Marduk-nadin-alir.
- F. His name meant "Nebo is the protector against misfortune."
  - 1. His name is sometimes spelled Nebuchadrezzar.
- G. His home: Babylon, queen city of the world in his day.
  - 1. Located on the Euphrates River in the fertile Mesopotamian Valley.
  - 2. In present day Iraq.

## II. His Illustrious Career.

- A. His father appointed him commander in chief of the Babylonian armies.

B. He fought and defeated Pharoah Necho of Egypt in the battle of Carchemish, 606 B.C.

C. He proceeded to capture all of Coele-syria and Palestine.

  1. He pursued the Egyptians to their borders.

D. His ascension to the throne of Babylon.

  1. Nabopolassar died in 604 B.C.
  2. Nebuchadnezzar made a forced march across the burning Arabian desert to secure his throne.
  3. He feared a challenge to his claim.

E. The Extent of His Kingdom.

  1. He expanded Babylon into the first "world kingdom."
  2. He ruled "the fertile crescent" of the Tigris-Euphrates River Valley and the eastern Mediterranean coast.

F. His impact on the Hebrews.

  1. He took Jerusalem in 606, placing Jehoiakim and the nation under tribute.
  2. In 601 he returned and laid siege to the city and upon its capture:
     a. He looted the temple.
     b. He deported Jehoiachin to Babylon along with all the important citizens.
     c. Zedekiah was appointed ruler.
  3. In 589 Zedekiah rebelled and again he laid siege to the city, II Kings 25: 1-5.
     a. In 587 Jerusalem fell.
     b. Zedekiah witnessed his sons' execution and was then blinded, II Kings 25: 6-7.

        - c. Jerusalem was burned and the people scattered, II Kings 25:9.
        - d. The captivity lasted until 536 B.C.

G. His building projects.

    1. It was as a builder that Nebuchadnezzar made his greatest record.
    2. He renovated and beautified Babylon and fortified it with giant walls.
    3. He rebuilt the temple of Bel Murduk.
    4. He built the world famous hanging gardens for his Median wife.
    5. He engaged in massive building projects in in other cities as well as reservoirs and irrigation canals.

H. Babylon, his capitol, as described by Herodotus.

    1. The most beautiful city in the world.
    2. 14 miles square, its walls enclosed some 200 square miles.
    3. The walls were 85 ft. thick and 335 ft. high with a moat surrounding them.
    4. Its 100 gates were of brass.
    5. The Euphrates flowed through its midst.
        - a. There was a bridge.
        - b. Ferry boats.
        - c. A tunnel under the river.
    6. Twenty-five streets run parallel north and south and the same number east and west.

I. His policy was to deport conquered people to provide slave labor for his building projects.

## III. His Character.

A. He was a man of genius as seen in his great accomplishments.

B. A notable ruler and leader of men.

C. He was a religious man.

  1. He made and worshipped the idols of his fathers.
  2. As king his worship would have been mainly to Nebo (Mercury).
  3. He was also a devotee of Merodach-Bel.
  4. Dan. 3: 1, the golden image of Dura.

D. He was ill-tempered, given to fits of raging anger.

  1. Dan. 3: 12-13.

E. He was cruel and merciless to those who displeased him.

  1. These traits were common and expected in Oriental tyrants.
  2. Dan. 2: 5.

F. He was proud and haughty.

  1. He was drunk with power.
  2. "Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely."
  3. Dan. 4: 29-30.
  4. Ninety percent of the bricks found in the ruins of Babylon are stamped with his name.
  5. Is. 14: 4, 12-14 perhaps it was Nebuchadnezzar that Isaiah foresaw.

G. He had a nobler side to his nature, he could admit his error and honor a better man.

  1. Dan. 3: 28-30.

**IV. His Humiliation.**

- A. The haunting dream, Dan. 4: 10-16.
- B. Daniel's interpretation.
- C. The divine judgment: insanity, Dan. 4: 28-33.
  - 1. Nebuchadnezzar's condition, he thought himself an ox.
  - 2. Lycanthrophy, a rare mental ailment.
  - 3. Seven times = seven years.

**V. His Conversion.**

- A. Several impressions were made that led to this change.
  - 1. Dan. 2: 46-47, when Daniel interpreted the dream of the metallic man.
  - 2. Dan. 3: 28-30, upon the deliverance of the three Hebrew boys.
- B. His proclamation at the recovery of his health. Dan. 4: 34-37.
  - 1. This decree he sent throughout his domains and to all neighboring kingdoms, Dan. 4: 1-3.

**VI. His Death.**

- A. He died in 562 B.C. after a brief illness.
- B. He reigned for 43 years.

**VII. Lessons to Remember:**

- A. The danger and intoxicating effect of prosperity, Deut. 8: 11-14, 17-18.
- B. The sure fall that false pride leads to, Prov. 16: 18.
- C. The power and ability of our God to humble even the most powerful sinners, Ps. 73: 18-19.

D. The surety of divine threats unless they are averted by repentence, II Pet. 2:3.

E. We see that God mingles mercy with his chastisements in this present life.

F. We see the positive benefits of affliction, Ps. 119:71.

G. Nebuchadnezzar learned that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men. He still so rules.

H. We see the uncertainty of earthly power and possessions.

I. The purpose of God's discipline is to save. Heb. 12:10.

J. We learn the propriety of confession of our faults and of God's righteousness. I John 1:9-10.

K. Had Nebuchadnezzar but asked Daniel to teach him the ways of Jehovah, and had he humbly learned, he could have avoided all his misery.

L. The greatest lesson of life to learn is to walk humbly with God, Micah 6:8.

## NICODEMUS

### A Ruler of the Jews

### John 3:1-3

INTRO: John's gospel records a number of Jesus' interviews and personal teaching situations. Among the most notable of those he had was with Nicodemus.

**I. About the subject:**

A. A Pharisee.

1. A small, separate group of 6,000 religious leaders.

    2. They were the chief teachers of the synagogue.
    3. They were generally a self-righteous group.
  B. A ruler of the Jews.
    1. A member of the Sanhedrin council.
      a. The council of 70 plus the high priest.
    2. Thus he was a leader in the political, religious and intellectual realm of Jewry.
  C. He was a wealthy man.
    1. He brought the burial spices for Jesus which were very costly, John 19: 38-41.

**II. The Situation and Setting:**

  A. Jesus had just brought his ministry to Jerusalem.
  B. He had driven the money changers out of the temple, John 2: 13-22.
  C. Many believed on him, beholding his signs, 2: 23-25.
  D. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night.
    1. Was he afraid of the other Jewish leaders?
    2. Was he too proud to be seen with such a lowly man?
    3. Was he timid?
    4. The rabbis said that the best time to study the law was at night when undisturbed.
    5. Perhaps he wanted privacy for a serious talk.
    6. Maybe he could not wait till morning.
    7. It is to his honor that he came. It indicates he was seeking knowledge.

**III. The Conversation, John 3:2-15.**

  A. Nicodemus' concessions to Jesus.

1. He called the young Nazarene, "Rabbi." A title of distinction.
2. He admitted that he was "a teacher come from God."
3. He conceded his miraculous "signs."
4. He saw that God was with him.
5. He did not admit his Messiahship at this point.

B. Christ's declaration, John 3: 3.

1. "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
2. It seems that Nicodemus felt that his race, his position as a "ruler", would entitle him to a place in the kingdom. This was a Jewish concept.
3. Christ was not intimidated by this powerful dignitary, nor did he adjust his message to him.
4. It is noteworthy that Christ by-passed all the formal niceties of introduction and small talk and took Nicodemus to the heart of his problem.
5. Nicodemus would have talked of signs and wonders and traded compliments. Jesus waved these aside as unimportant and talked about a change of heart and life.

C. Nicodemus' Real Need.

1. "Except one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God," John 3: 3.
2. Nicodemus had everything that birth and breeding could give a man and yet Jesus told him that he must start all over again. To

such an aristocrat, this was stunning. It was an audacious saying from the young Galilian to a man of his station.

3. "Born again" is from the Greek *anothen.*
    a. It means "from the beginning, completely, radically;"
    b. Also, it means "for the second time;"
    c. And, "from above, from God."
    d. All of these thoughts are included.

D. Nicodemus' problem: he did not understand.
  1. "How can a man be born when he is old?" John 3:4.
  2. There are two types of misunderstanding:
    a. Because one has not yet reached a stage of knowledge and experience where he is able to grasp a truth.
    b. An unwillingness to understand, a refusal to see, Matt. 13:15.
    c. We would think that Nicodemus was of the former.
  3. It did not occur to him that Jesus spoke of a spiritual birth, he could only think of the physical.
  4. Not just Nicodemus, but even the apostles, failed to comprehend the spiritual import of Jesus' words.

E. The new birth explained by Jesus, John 3:5-8.
  1. It is to "be born of water and the Spirit."
    a. Paul speaks of this new birth in Tit. 3:5.
    b. Peter makes it clear in Acts 2:38.

            - c. The birth of water and the Spirit puts one into the kingdom.
                - 1) But baptism puts us into the kingdom, Gal. 3: 27, I Cor. 12: 13.
                - 2) Therefore baptism is the new birth.
            - d. II Cor. 5: 7, One is a new creature "in Christ."
                - 1) But one is baptized into Christ.
                - 2) Therefore, the new birth is baptism.
            - e. The new birth is made possible through the New Testament gospel. I Pet. 1: 22-23.
            - f. There is but one birth consisting of two elements, water and the Spirit.
        - 2. It is the spirit of man that needs to be reborn, not his fleshly body, John 3: 6.
        - 3. The birth of the spirit may be compared to the wind.
            - a. The wind is invisible, one cannot see the wind, only the results of its presence.
            - b. It is the invisible soul of man that is reborn, changed, by the invisible Spirit of God in salvation.
                - 1) Although you cannot see the Spirit at work upon the human spirit, you can definitely see the results.
    - F. Nicodemus' Response:
        - 1. "How can these things be?" John 3: 9.
        - 2. It was not that he questioned the *desirability* of the change, rather he doubted the *possibility* of it.

3. When one is old it is hard to change to be radically different.
    a. Evangelism reaps its greatest harvests among the young; not because they are gullible, but because they are less hardened.
4. Humanly, such a drastic change is impossible, but the Spirit of God is able to effect it, Gen. 18: 14.

G. Jesus' Conclusion, John 3: 10-15.
1. Are you a teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? This is a sharp chide.
2. "You have not received our witness!" A rebuke.
3. The key: Faith in Jesus as God's Son is essential.
    a. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life."

**IV. Nicodemus' Growth and Conversion.**

A. Nicodemus dared to speak out in defence of Christ among his colleagues, John 7: 32, 45-52.
1. It brought him only insult from them.

B. When his peers had cruelly murdered the Lord, he and Joseph of Arimathea boldly stepped forth to claim the body for burial.
1. This act no doubt cost him his station of power and respect forever.
2. But his decision was made. The change had occurred.

3. With tender hands and tear-stained eyes he did all that he could for his Savior.

V. **Lessons to Remember:**

A. Nicodemus was convinced of Jesus' divine mission by his signs. So should we be, John 20: 30-31.

B. We should admire a man of stature that is concerned for his soul. So few are.

C. Beyond the membership of the church there are many who are sympathetic towards Jesus, yet they need to "enter the kingdom."

D. The cause of true religion is never furthered by deference paid to prominent people.

E. The church never gains ground by fawning upon those who condescend to give it their attention.

F. The cause of Christ never thrives by seeking to accommodate itself to the contemporary mind or by compromising its faith to win worldly people.

G. It is a fatal mistake to think that Christianity is something to be discussed and not experienced!

H. Nicodemus had much of the world's prizes, but none of it would put him into the kingdom of Christ.

I. To be born into a good Christian family will not put you into the kingdom.

J. You must be born of water and the spirit to enjoy God's blessings.

K. You may not know how the Spirit works to remake a man, but you can see the results.

L. We must recognize and acknowledge Jesus and stand up for him in our Sanhedrin as did Nicodemus.

## PHOEBE, THE SERVANT OF THE CHURCH

### Rom. 16:1-2.

INTRO: The closing chapter of Romans is a page from Paul's personal life. Some thirty-five of his personal friends are mentioned by name. In the opening words he pens an introduction and recommendation of Pheobe, a Christian lady, who seems to have delivered the letter for him.

**I. Her Home.**

A. Cenchrea, the seaport of Corinth.

B. Located on the Saronic Gulf of the Aegean Sea in Southern Greece.

C. It was an important, bustling, business and commercial center.

D. It was a center of immorality and wickedness, sharing the evil influence of its big sister, Corinth.

E. It was a worthy accomplishment to be a *Christian* woman at Cenchrea.

**II. Her Record of Godliness.**

A. She was a "sister" to Paul and the saints.

1. Saints share a common Father, Gal. 3:26.
2. We are brothers and sisters in a heavenly family.
3. We share a filial love and godly concern for each other wherever we be.

B. She was a servant of the church.

1. Thus, she was a great person by God's standard, Matt. 20:26.

2. There is an area of service for women in the Kingdom.
    a. Tit. 2:3-6.
    b. Phil. 4:2-3.
    c. I Tim. 5:9-10.
3. She was a "deaconess."
    a. The same word is used as in the case of men who were deacons.
    b. Remember *deacons have no authority* except as delegated by elders.
    c. We have both male and female teachers in the church, Eph. 4:11-12.
    d. Was this what he spoke of in I Tim. 3:8-13?
    e. Was the widow indeed to be a deaconess? I Tim. 5:3-11. She could be supported.
    f. If so, they still could not teach or have authority over men.
        1) I Tim. 2:12.
    g. I would conclude that women served in many areas of the early church, but that there was no formal, official office or authority given to them.

C. She was a "helper" of Paul and many other saints.
1. Gal. 6:1-2, Christianity is a religion of burden-bearing.
2. Gal. 2:10.
3. We need to be helpers to all who have need.
    a. Help the young be strong and faithful.
    b. Help the young person in trouble.

        - c. Help the traveller or the newcomer.
        - d. Help the poor and needy.
        - e. Help the sick and suffering.
        - f. Help the aged.
        - g. Help the gospel preacher and elders.
        - h. Help the missionary.

**III. Paul's Instructions to the church regarding Pheobe.**

- A. "Receive her."
    - 1. Accept her as a fellow-Christian.
        - a. In your congregation.
        - b. In your hearts and in your homes.
    - 2. Receive her in a manner worthy of the saints, i.e., as saints should.
        - a. There is a standard of fellowship and hospitality that all saints are expected to live up to.
- B. "Assist her in *whatever* matter she may have need of you."
    - 1. Our faithful service will bring us reciprocal blessings, Gal. 6:7.
    - 2. We should be ready and quick to volunteer our help to brethren who come our way.
        - a. To locate a place to live.
        - b. To find a job.
        - c. To contact friends and family.
        - d. With transportation.

**IV. This is an Apostolic Letter of Recommendation.**

- A. II Cor. 3:1-3, Paul needed no letter of recommendation to Corinth, but he did need a recommendation to the Jerusalem church, Acts 9:26-28.

B. Acts 15:23-27, Judas and Silas had such a letter.

C. The church today would save itself much grief and trouble if its elders would give and ask for such a letter of each family that comes or leaves.

V. **Lessons to Remember.**

A. Let every Christian woman seek this example of Christian service to others.

B. Let us all hold in high esteem godly women who serve as did Pheobe.

C. May every congregation and every home dedicate themselves to reaching this high plane of fellowship and service to others.

D. May each Christian consecrate his means which God has blest him with to humanitarian service.

E. Even a cup of cold water given to a disciple will bring its reward, Mk. 9:41.

F. Like Paul, let us be grateful for kindness done for us.

G. Our conduct toward others should always be worthy of saints.

H. While we cherish our congregational autonomy, may we never forget the oneness of the church whether in Rome or Cenchrea.

I. While we must not encourage women to forbidden roles in the church, let us encourage them in those areas of teaching and service which they can fill.

J May we always be faithful Christians, even in a city like Cenchrea.

# PILATE

## A Corrupt Civil Servant

### John 18:28-19:16

INTRO: Paul wrote that Jesus before Pilate witnessed the good confession. The name of Pilate lives in perpetual infamy because of his role in the trial and death of our Lord. From the Jewish writers Philo and Josephus we learn a great deal about this man and his career.

**I. What We Know About the Man.**

A. He was a Roman citizen, a position greatly prized.

B. He was married to Claudia Procula, granddaughter for the late emperor Augustus.

C. His father-in-law was the emperor, Tiberius, from whom he received his appointment.

D. The name Pilate meant "armed with a javelin" in Latin.

E. He was a man of energy and enterprise, else the Romans would never have placed him in office.

F. He was able to live a luxurious life as a Roman official with great wealth and indulgence.

G. He was known for his brutality in dealing with opposition.

H. He was a vain and stubborn man who insisted on his way.

I. He was Procurator of Judea.

1. He was the fifth man to hold the office in some 25 years. Before him were: Coponius, Marcus Ambivius, Annius Rufus, Valerius Gratus.

2. He took office in 26 A.D., being appointed by his father-in-law, Emperor Tiberius.

3. Procurators were paid by the Roman government and strictly forbidden to take presents or bribes.

4. A procurator was an agent of the emperor, who in smaller provinces was responsible for all civil and military affairs including taxation.

5. One had to be at least 27 years old to hold this office.

J. Pilate's official residence was in Caesarea on the coast of Palestine. He would travel to Jerusalem to keep an eye on the situation when the national festivals were observed.

1. While in Jerusalem he would stay at the grand palace built by Herod on the west side of the city.

K. He had some 3,000 Roman troops at his disposal.

## II. Pilate's Administration in Judea.

A. His administration was one of conflict, difficulty and failure.

B. He showed complete contempt and lack of sympathy for his Jewish subjects.

C. Three previous debacles:

1. On his first visit to Jerusalem he violated the Pax Romana which prohibited offending local religious customs.

a. The Roman troops carried standards with small images of Caesar on their tips. Since Caesar was considered a god by the Romans, the Jews said these were idolatrous images and forbade them to be brought into the city.

    b. Other procurators had respected this request, but not Pilate.
    c. He slipped them in by night; a six day riot followed.
    d. The Jews whom he threatened to kill bared their necks for execution rather than give in. He was forced to back down.
    e. Tiberius reprimanded him.

2. Jerusalem needed a new water supply.
    a. Pilate proposed building an aquaduct, but lacked the funds.
    b. He took the necessary money from the temple treasury.
    c. This enraged the Jews, especially the priesthood.
    d. When a riot broke out, Pilate sent his troops into the crowd in civilian dress, with concealed weapons. At the given signal, they brutally beat and slaughtered the protestors.
3. Pilate had shields made, inscribed with the emperor's name. They were to be housed at Herod's old palace in Jerusalem.
    a. Again the Jews protested that since they bore the name of Caesar, who claimed deity, they were idolatrous.
    b. The Jews again complained to Tiberius and he ordered Pilate to remove them.

D. The Roman government expected a governor to rule with a minimum of violence while maintaining peace and tranquility.

E. Philo quotes Agrippa who charged Pilate with "corruptibility, violence, robberies, ill-treatment of the people, grievances, continuous executions without even the form of a trial, endless and intolerable cruelties."

F. He had made as many mistakes as a man could make and expect to keep his post. The Jewish leaders knew this.

## III. How Pilate handled Jesus' Trial.

A. He first tried to avoid dealing with the problem.

1. "Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law." John 18: 31.
2. He then sent him to Herod of Galilee hoping he would handle the situation; but Herod, being wily, refused and returned Jesus to Pilate, Lk. 23: 7-11.

B. He sought to avoid a decision on Jesus by making the Jews choose between him and Barabbas, Mk. 15: 6-15.

1. He thought surely they would prefer Jesus' release over Barabbas.
2. He underestimated the hatred of the Jews against Jesus.

C. He then attempted to strike a compromise by scourging Jesus, Lk. 23: 16. "I will therefore chastise him and release him."

1. Perhaps this would satisfy their desire for vengence.

D. Last of all he appealed to their sense of compassion and humanity.
   1. "Behold the man." John 19: 5.
   2. "Shall I crucify your king?" John 19:15.

E. The Jews lodged five complaints against Jesus.
   1. That he perverted the nation.
   2. That he forbade giving tribute (taxes) to Caesar.
   3. That he made himself a king.
   4. That he stirred up the people in Judea and Galilee, Lk. 23: 1-4.
   5. That he made himself the Son of God (blasphemy), John 19: 7.

F. His moral collapse.
   1. Pilate knew the charges against Jesus were lies, provoked by envy, Mk. 15: 10.
   2. He knew Jesus was completely innocent.
   3. He three times pronounced him innocent and sought his release.
   4. He succumbed to political blackmail.
      a. The Jewish leaders intimidated Pilate into submission.
      b. "If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar's friend." John 19: 12.
      c. He cared not for the Jews' opinion of him. But he was afraid of the emperor and of losing his position.
      d. This meant more to him than justice or Jesus.
   5. He washed his hands to protest his innocence

and delivered Jesus to be crucified, Matt. 27: 24-26.

## IV. His Fall From Power and Final End.

A. Pilate was deposed as procurator in 37 A.D.

   1. Because he used brutal violence against a group of Samaritan religious fanatics.
   2. Vitellius, governor of the Roman province of Syria, dismissed him from office.
   3. He was sent to Rome to answer to Caesar for his actions.

B. Tradition says he was banished to Vienne on the Rhone in southern France.

C. He finally committed suicide.

## V. Lessons to Remember:

A. Pilate is typical of myriads of politicians who put policy above principle.

B. His brutality toward his subjects came back upon his head, Gal. 6: 7.

C. He knew right, but lacked the moral courage to do it.

D. His corrupt and worldly life had worn out his moral principles.

E. We cannot wash away moral responsibility.

   1. Pilate ruled for death but sought to avoid the guilt.
   2. He befouled justice as he washed his hands.

F. Pilate saw the Hebrews sell their souls because of their hatred for Jesus.

G. Pilate's main interest was not what is my duty, but what is in my best interest?

H. Pilate stood in the very presence of his Creator and Savior and yet died a lost sinner.

I. May we have a strong desire to know the truth that makes men free and do it rather than be like Pilate who turned and walked away.

## PRISCILLA AND AQUILLA

### Co-workers for God

INTRO: The history of the Bible has woven into it the biographical sketches of God's faithful servants. Their lives present to us in living form the lessons God wants us to incorporate into our lives. In studying the "big" names, we often overlook the "little people" of the sacred record. In doing this we deny ourselves many fascinating and rewarding blessings. Two of God's great helpers were Priscilla and Aquilla.

**I. What we know about them, Acts 18:1-4.**

A. They were Jews by race.

B. Their original home was Pontus, a district of Asia Minor, far north of Palestine.

C. They had lived in Rome but had recently been forced to leave by order of Emperor Claudius.

D. Paul met them in Corinth, the trade center of the Aegean world.

E. They were tent makers by profession.

F. They were a religious family who gladly opened their home to a teacher of God.

**II. Their Work for God.**

A. They opened their home to God's teacher.

1. Hospitality is part of Christianity.
    a. I Pet. 4:7-10.
    b. III John 5-8.
    c. The blessings that accrue to us are many.
        1) Their knowledge teaches us.
        2) Their zeal inspires us.
        3) Their faith blesses us and our children.
2. In opening their home to Paul, they gave Christ a home, Matt. 25:40.

B. Their mission work in Ephesus, Acts 18:18-21.
1. They were first century vocational missionaries.
    a. Self-supporting families are desperately needed in every mission field.
2. They were willing to venture into new areas for the Master . . . so should we.

C. The church met in their house in Ephesus, I Cor. 16:19.
1. Thousands of congregations have started similarly.
2. Our houses are gifts from God to be used to his glory.
3. Churches can exist and flourish without modern buildings.
4. We need to have churches *before* we build buildings.
5. They took their "church" with them wherever they went.
    a. The faithful saint today will find a faithful congregation or start one when he moves away!

- D. They taught Apollos the orator-preacher the Truth, Acts 18:24-28.
  1. They were interested in religious leaders, who were not in the fellowship.
  2. They showed wisdom in teaching them privately.
  3. They believed the gospel would overcome any obstacle.
  4. They helped him get oriented and adjusted in the Lord's work.
- E. They risked their life for Paul, Rom. 16:3-4.
  1. They heroically faced some great danger in behalf of their friend, brother and preacher.
  2. Likely this was in Ephesus, Acts 19:21-20:1.
  3. God's preachers need such friends today.
- F. They were Jews who loved and were loved by Gentile Christians. They had no racial prejudice, Rom. 16:4.
  1. Jas. 2:8-10.
- G. They were life-time friends of Paul . . . to the end, II Tim. 4:19.
  1. The gospel preacher desperately needs the kind of constant friends Priscilla and Aquilla were.

## III. Lessons to Remember:

- A. They are an example of Christian business people working diligently for God.
- B. Let us open our homes to God's children as they did.
- C. We see the proper role of a Christian woman in teaching men, privately, not publicly, I Tim. 2:12.

D. We need 10,000 vocational missionaries like Priscilla and Aquilla.

E. May we have patience and concern for religious teachers who need to learn more truth, like they did with Apollos.

F. Let us make our homes a welcome place for the church to meet if need be.

G. Let us love all of God's children, regardless of what their race or station may be.

H. May we always be the true friends of God's preachers that this loyal couple was.

## SIMON, THE SORCERER

## A CHRISTIAN WHO FELL FROM GRACE

INTRO: The best way to learn the great doctrines of Christianity is to see them illustrated in the lives of those who were the actors on the stage of real life in the apostolic age of the church. One such study is that of Simon of Samaria in Acts 8.

**I. The Background and Setting, Acts 8:4-8.**

A. The Preacher.

1. Philip.

a. One of the seven deacons from Jerusalem, Acts 6:5.

b. He was among the disciples scattered by persecution, Acts 8:2.

c. He was able to confirm his message by miraculous deeds of the Holy Spirit.

   - d. He was a powerful, faithful preacher of the gospel.

B. The Samaritans.
   1. A mongrel race of half-breed Jews.
   2. Their land was an enclave north of Jerusalem and south of Galilee.
   3. When the Assyrians conquered the Northern kingdom of Israel, they deported the higher classes and brought in foreigners to repopulate the land.
   4. Their religion was a syncretistic corruption of Jehovah worship with paganism.
   5. The Jews dispised and shunned them, John 4:9.
   6. A spiritually ignorant and superstitious people.

## II. Simon.

A. The successful sorcerer, Acts 8:9-11.
   1. All that we know of him is in this chapter.
   2. He was a sorcerer, a magician who claimed supernatural powers.
      - a. The world was full of such sorcerers.
   3. He claimed to be the power of God called great.
      - a. i.e., that he emanated from God.
   4. He *kept on giving out* that he was some great one.
   5. He astonished the Samaritans with his deceptions.
      - a. He had continued this for a long time.

B. Simon the Baptized Believer, Acts 8: 12-13.

1. Philip preached good tidings, the gospel, concerning
    a. The Kingdom of God, the church, Matt. 16: 18.
    b. The name of Jesus.
2. The Samaritans believed and were baptized, Mk. 16: 15-16.
    a. They were thus saved.
3. Simon also believed and was baptized.
    a. He was also saved.
4. He continued with Philip.
    a. Likely he "clung" to him.
5. He was beholding the signs Philip worked and was amazed.
    a. The Greek suggests "he stood out of himself" or jumped out of his skin with amazement.

C. Simon the Backsliding Brother, Acts 8: 14-22.

1. The great news about Samaria's conversions had reached Jerusalem.
    a. We should be anxious to hear the good news of the growth of the kingdom in every place.
2. Peter and John were sent to confer the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit upon them.
    a. They had received the "ordinary indwelling of the Spirit" when baptized, Acts 2: 38.
    b. They could work no miracles, however.

3. The "laid hands on them" and they received the Holy Spirit.
    a. They then had the power to perform miracles.
    b. Note that in apostolic times, miraculous gifts were given either by baptism of the Spirit or the imposition of the apostles' hands.
4. Simon offered them money that he might have the power to give the Holy Spirit to others.
    a. His name is yet given to the act of buying spiritual office or power: Simony.
5. Peter severely rebuked Simon for even thinking he could buy the Holy Spirit's gifts.
6. Simon was in jeopardy of damnation, I Cor. 10: 12.
    a. Gal. 5: 4.

D. Simon the Penitent Sinner, Acts 8: 24.

1. Every Christian must do as Simon was told when they sin.
    a. Repent of the sin.
    b. Pray God that the sin be forgiven.
    c. I John 1: 8-9.
    d. Jas. 5: 16.

E. Simon's End.

1. Tradition says he later took up his sorceries again and became the persistent antagonist of Peter.
2. It is further alleged that he fathered the great Gnostic heresy that later plagued the church.

3. Since these traditions are unsubstantiated we have no certain knowledge of his latter days.

## III. Lessons to Remember:

A. Like Philip we must cross over all racial, cultural and color lines with the gospel of Jesus.

B. We need faithful preachers today to preach the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus.

C. Let us also be anxious to hear of the progress of the missionaries in every place.

D. Remember that every generation produces its equivalents of Simon who claim great powers and deceive the people.

E. Since there is but one baptism today (Eph. 4: 5) and since there are no apostles to lay hands on us, we obviously cannot have the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

F. May we never, like Simon, think of godliness as a way of gain, I Tim. 6: 5.

G. Simon failed to forget the past and press on to the things before. Phil. 3: 13.

H. He did not give enough diligence to make his calling and election sure, II Pet. 1: 10.

I. Simon was wrong in that he sought to receive the Spirit to benefit himself instead of to help others.

J. He forgot that God's gifts are dependent upon character, not on one's wealth.

K. We must never forget that Heaven's gifts can never be purchased with money or merit, they are always freely given of grace, Eph. 2: 8-9.

L. Remember, like Simon, we Christians can so sin as to be in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity.

M. The first thing to do with sin is to repent of it and pray for forgiveness.

N. May God send us teachers who will rebuke us when we go astray, II Tim. 4:2.

CONCLUSION: Have you like the Samaritans and Simon believed and been baptized? Are there evil thoughts in your heart that demand God's attention? Will you respond as did the people of our study today?

## TEN FAITHLESS MEN

### Num. 13:1-16

INTRO: Have you ever heard of these important men of Israel's notable history?

A. *Shammua,* the son of Acccur of the tribe of Reuben.

*Shaphat,* the son of Hori of the tribe of Simeon.
*Iqal,* the son of Joseph, of the tribe of Issachar.
*Palti,* the son of Raphu of the tribe of Benjamin.
*Gaddiel,* the son of Sodi, of the tribe of Zebulon.
*Gaddi,* the son of Susi, of the tribe of Manasseh.
*Ammiel,* the son of Gemalli, of the tribe of Dan.
*Sethur,* the son of Michael, of the tribe of Asher.
*Nahbi,* the son of Vophsi, of the tribe of Naphtali.
*Gevel,* the son of Machi, of the tribe of Gad.

B. These men had a profound influence on their nation.

C. They led the way in a national decision that actually overrode the will of Moses.

D. Their names are virtually unknown even to Bible scholars and preachers.

E. Only when linked to two other names is their identity recognized. Num. 13: 1-17; 25-33, Joshua and Caleb.

## I. Their Privileges.

A. They were all princes and leaders of their tribes.
   1. Num. 13: 1-3.

B. They were honored with the responsible job of scouting out the land.

C. They had all witnessed the power of God in his judgments on Egypt and in the Exodus.

D. They had seen the marvels and wonders of Sinai and heard the matchless Law given.

E. They saw the beauty and bounty of the promised land.

## II. Their Evil Report.

A. They exaggerated the dangers that existed.

B. They ignored the Divine aid that would have given them the victory, Matt. 19: 26.

C. They were pessimists, their minds were filled with negative thoughts and fears.
   1. They had a grasshopper complex.
   2. Faith could have given them the victory, Mk. 9: 23.

D. "We are not able to go up against the people," Num. 13: 31.

E. They were moral cowards, afraid to risk themselves for a noble cause.

## III. Their Impact Upon the People, Num. 14:1-10.

A. They upset and demoralized the entire camp, 14: 1.

B. They turned the people against the heaven appointed leadership of Moses and Aaron, 14: 2.

C. They turned the people's heart back to Egypt in spite of all God had done for them, 14: 2.

D. They caused the people to speak evil against God, 14: 3.

E. They incensed the people to want to stone Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb, the true and faithful leaders.

## IV. The Awful Price That Was Paid.

A. They cost virtually an entire generation of Hebrews their home in Canaan.

B. They brought the wrath of Jehovah upon the nation which, except for the intercession of Moses, would have exterminated them all. 14: 11-12, 15.

C. They were responsible for the curse of the 40 year's wilderness wandering, 14: 28-30.

D. The faithless spies all were punished with death by plague, 14: 36-38.

E. Their names are buried in the dust of the centuries, forever stained, forgotten.

## V. Lessons to Remember:

A. God's people must walk by faith, not by sight, II Cor. 5: 7.

B. We *can do* all things through Christ who strengthens us, Phil. 4: 13.

C. Let us rid our minds of negative thoughts and defeatist attitudes and get to work doing God's will.

D. Let every leader be fully conscious of the awesome power of leadership for weal or woe!

E. Remember that majorities are never trustworthy criteria of right and wrong.

F. Rather than *vox populi vox Dei,* it is more often *vox populi vox Diaboli* in moral and religious matters.

G. A statement may be true in its contents, yet be false, misleading and dangerous in its interpretation and application.

H. That which frightened men of doubt was a challenge to men of faith like Joshua and Caleb.

I. Moral cowardice is the source of every mean and pitiful thing. It renders men afraid of duty and death and leaves them paralyzed in the moment of decision.

J. God's people often have to choose between the persuasions of false and faithful leaders.

K. May the Lord give us leaders like Joshua and Caleb and deliver us from men like the ten.

L. Opportunities passed by today may never be reclaimed tomorrow.

## THE THIEF WHO WENT TO PARADISE

### Lk. 23:32-43

INTRO: Isaiah described in minute detail the trial and death of our Lord in his 53rd chapter. In vs. 10-12 he predicted that Jesus would be "numbered with the transgressors." The fulfillment of this we read of in Luke 23: 32-43. Usually when lessons are presented about the thief on the cross, the only point made is that he is no suitable example for salvation apart from obedience to the gospel ordinances. There is much more to his story than this.

### I. What We Know About The Man.

- A. Legend calls his name Dismas, but this is uncertain.
- B. He was a *malefactor,* i.e., a worker of evil.
  - 1. One who plans a course of evil.
- C. He was a *thief,* i.e., a robber, a plunderer, a brigand.
  - 1. It means more than just one who steals.
- D. He possibly was one of the Jewish radical patriots who engaged in a violent guerilla war against the occupation forces of Rome.
  - 1. Such men were considered popular heroes in the public eye because of their opposition to Rome.
  - 2. To the Jews, such deeds against Rome were not crimes but patriotism.
- E. He was a guilty lawbreaker, justly condemned, Lk. 23: 41. His counterpart is found on death row in our prisons.

F. He was a dying man.
   1. His life blood was flowing from his wounds.
   2. He had but a few hours to live, at best.

G. He was a doomed man.
   1. He was a sinner, unforgiven, Rom. 6:23.
   2. He had only damnation to look forward to, John 8:21-24.

H. He yet had a conscience that cried out.
   1. Some have seared their conscience, I Tim. 4:2.
   2. Heb. 6:4-6.

**II. His Awful Circumstances.**

A. Crucified, impaled upon a wooden cross and left to die.
   1. A practice Rome had borrowed from Phoenicia.
   2. Some hung there a week or more before expiring.
   3. Three kinds of crosses were known:
      a. One was shaped like an X, now called the St. Andrew's cross.
      b. Another was shaped like a T.
      c. The other was the one we are most familiar with, like a daggar with an extension above the cross-bar. On this a superscription could be placed, Lk. 23:38.
   4. No other death was comparable to the cross in its horror and ghastly pain.
   5. The Romans reserved crucifixion only for slaves and the vilest of criminals.

B. The place of his execution was outside the walls of Jerusalem on a small knoll called Golgotha, the place of a skull, Matt. 27:33.

C. The crucifixion seems to have occured about 9:00 A.M. The darkness covered the land from 12:00 to 3:00 P.M., Matt. 27:45.

D. An ugly mob milled before the crosses, insulting and taunting Jesus.

  1. A small band of women and John and Mary watched helplessly, John 19:25-27.

E. Late in the day the soldiers broke the legs of the thief to hasten his death, John 19:31-32.

### III. What He Did That Day, Lk. 23:40-42.

A. He rebuked his companion for failure to fear God.

  1. Lk. 23:40. He recognized God's existence and power.
  2. For railing against this innocent man, Jesus.

B. He humbly acknowledged his guilt.

  1. He obviously repented of his evil deeds.
  2. He saw his true plight.

C. He saw Jesus' real royalty even when it was hidden from sight by the terrible circumstances.

D. He believed in the mercy as well as the power of the Savior.

  1. He eagerly sought for salvation.

E. He courageously confessed the Savior.

  1. He read with divine clarity the superscription over Jesus' head, i.e., "The King of the Jews."
  2. Perhaps when he heard Jesus pray for his executors, hopes of pardon flashed through his mind.

    3. He had been with the crowd against Jesus, but now he stands with Jesus against the crowd.

F. He did for the Christ the one thing he could do on the cross. He remonstrated against his companion's taunts.

G. In all this we see faith, repentance, confession, and service.

### IV. His Request, Lk. 23:42.

A. "Lord Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."

B. He knew two things: he was a great sinner; beside him hung a great Savior.

C. His mind was seemingly cluttered with the current Jewish ideas about the kingdom.

D. His fumbling for correct words made no difference to the Lord, Rom. 8:26-27.

E. His request caused rejoicing among the angels in heaven, Lk. 15:7.

### V. The Promise He Received, Lk. 23:43.

A. The Lord did more than the thief asked or thought of, Eph. 3:20.

B. He heard the poor sinner favorably.

C. He spoke not of some future day, but *that very day*.

D. He promised no place in an earthly kingdom, but a place in Paradise.

    1. The place where the souls of the righteous dead await the resurrection.

2. Lk. 16:22-25.
3. Acts 2:31.
4. If the thief did not understand the meaning of paradise, he understood the meaning of "Today, thou shalt be with me."

## VI. The Thief and the Two Covenants.

A. The thief lived and died under the old covenant of Moses.
   1. Gal. 4:4.
   2. Col. 2:14.

B. The new covenant became effective only after Christ died, Heb. 9:16.

C. Before his death, Christ could bestow salvation upon any condition.
   1. After his death, it could only be had in compliance with the terms of the will.

D. The New Covenant will of Christ makes baptism a condition of salvation.
   1. Mk. 16:15-16.
   2. Acts 10:48.

## VII. Lessons to Remember:

A. No life can come in contact with Jesus without taking on a degree of immortality, either good or bad.

B. We see the brevity with which a great spiritual revolution may be wrought in a human mind. Morning saw him condemned before man's judgment bar, evening saw him accepted before the bar of heaven.

C. Like that thief, one day in our life can be the difference in damnation and salvation.

D. To whom else can we appeal for salvation but Christ? John 6:68.

E. It is the "lifted up" Christ that draws men, John 12:32.

F. It is never too late to turn to God in repentence.

G. This warrants those of us who speak for Christ to go to the condemned, the despairing and the dying, urging them to repent and return to Christ.

H. Too many men repent in their extremity when in reality it is only dread of coming doom. If they are spared they revert to their old ways.

I. In the midst of the mockery that day, his faith and confession to the truth breaks forth like a clap of thunder to all the witnesses.

J. God never allows faith in Christ and confession of his name to fail. If those who should confess him do not, he will raise up a witness, even if it must be a malefactor.

K. No portion of Scripture has suffered more distortion nor been used to mislead more people than this about the thief.

L. Let us handle aright the words of Truth always recognizing the two covenants, rightly dividing and applying the messages we read. II Tim. 2: 15.

# TITUS, THE PARTNER OF PAUL

## II Cor. 8:23

INTRO: Great men succeed in their careers usually because they have capable assistants by their side. Paul's great success was due in large part to that cadre of talented helpers he gathered around him. One of the most helpful was Titus.

**I. About the Man.**

- A. Although he played a prominent role in the evangelism of the Mediterranean world, few facts about him can be found.
  1. He is not mentioned in the book of Acts.
- B. He was Paul's "true child after a common faith".
  1. Tit. 1:4.
  2. This indicates that he was Paul's convert. I Cor. 4:15.
  3. He was "true", i.e., loyal, dependable and faithful.
- C. He was a Gentile Christian, Gal. 2:3.
  1. Today this means nothing at all, but then it was a unique thing.
  2. For a Gentile to be a prominent teacher and leader among men of the Jewish race was truly revolutionary.
- D. Titus first appears at the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15:1-29, Gal. 2:1-10.
  1. He went there with Paul and Barnabas from Antioch.
  2. From this some suppose he was a resident of Antioch.

E. It is possible that Luke and Titus were brothers.
  1. II Cor. 12: 18, "the brother" can very naturally be translated "his brother."

F. Titus walked in the same spirit and in the same steps of Paul, II Cor. 12: 18.
  1. Could there be a higher recommendation of a man's character or his work?

G. Titus seems to have been gifted for practical administration.
  1. Paul delegated him to organize the collection for the Judean saints, II Cor. 8: 6, 10-11.
  2. He was sent to Crete to set the churches in order, Tit. 1: 5.

H. From the assignments he drew, Titus must have had that strength of mind and toughness of character that especially fitted him to deal with and properly handle hard and difficult problems which arose.
  1. He was Paul's trouble shooter.
  2. There are two kinds of people.
    a. Those who make a bad situation worse.
    b. Those who can take hold of a bad situation and bring order, peace and harmony out of it.

I. Paul calls Titus his partner and fellow helper, II Cor. 8: 23.
  1. What a marvelous privilege to a young man to so serve with the peerless apostle.
  2. What a compliment to be so described.

J. He brought joy and comfort to Paul because of his faithful discharge of his duties, II Cor. 7: 13.

    1. Not all fellow Christians and co-workers bring joy and comfort. Some are a constant source of grief.

K. He was an affectionate Christian, II Cor. 7: 15.
    1. Pity the Christian who cannot show his affection for his fellow saints.
    2. Worse still is the brother or sister who has no affection to show.

**II. Chapters in Titus' Career.**

A. He was a man of the road for Christ. We find him at Jerusalem, Corinth, Ephesus, Troas, Nicopolis, Crete, Rome, Dalmatia.

B. At the Jerusalem Conference, Acts 15: 1-29, Gal. 2: 1-10.
    1. A Pharisaic element in the Palestinian churches was demanding that Gentile converts must take up the Jewish customs and culture.
    2. Paul, Barnabas and Titus went to Jerusalem to challenge their unscriptural efforts.
    3. Judaizing brethren demanded that Titus the Gentile be circumcized.
    4. Titus was a red flag to the Judaizers, but a flag of freedom to the Gentiles.
    5. It took a man of courage and strong convictions to face such a hostile gathering.
    6. With Paul and Barnabas, Titus stood unmovable in his determination to maintain the Christian liberty of Gentile brethren, Gal. 2: 5.
    7. They came out of that furnace of controversy with an apostolic document proclaiming that liberty, Acts 15: 23-29.

C. Problem Solving at Corinth.

1. Paul on his third missionary journey spent between two and three years at Ephesus.
2. He received word of serious difficulties at Corinth.
3. Unable to leave his work, Paul wrote our First Corinthian letter and sent it by his trusted helper Titus.
4. Shortly after this, a riot against Christians broke out forcing Paul to flee.
5. He went to Troas and finally to Philippi where Titus reported to him, II Cor. 2: 12-13.
6. During this time Paul fell sick and despaired for his life, II Cor. 7: 5.
7. He longed for the help and consolation Titus could afford him.
8. Titus brought great news of the favorable change which had been wrought at Corinth.
   a. II Cor. 7: 6-7.
   b. II Cor. 7: 13-16.

D. Titus heads up the fund-raising for the poor of Judea.

1. A famine had plagued the land of Palestine, Acts 11: 28-29.
2. Paul planned a benevolent fund from the Gentile churches to not only help the Hebrew saints but to melt away their prejudice, Rom. 15: 25-27.
3. He placed Titus in charge of this project.
   a. II Cor. 8: 1-7.

    - b. II Cor. 8:16-17. He eagerly volunteered for the task.
  - 4. The project was completed.

- E. Titus, the church builder at Crete.
  - 1. Tit. 1:5.
  - 2. Cretans were famed as a drunken, insolent, untrustworthy, lying, gluttonous people.
    - a. Polybius wrote: "The Cretans, on account of their innate avarice, live in a perpetual state of private quarrel and public feud and civil strive, and you will hardly find anywhere characters more tricky and deceitful than those of Crete."
    - b. Tit. 1:10-13.
    - c. "Cretans are chronic liars," Epiminides, 600 B.C.
  - 3. Paul had pioneered the work there but had to leave many matters undone.
  - 4. He trusted the task to his faithful helper, Titus.
    - a. To set things in order, Tit. 1:5-7.
    - b. To develop leadership in the churches.
    - c. To resist false teachers, Tit. 1:10-13.
    - d. To edify the saints, Tit. 2:1, 15; 3:1.
  - 5. His Dalmation mission.
    - 1. II Tim. 4:10.
    - 2. "Dalmatia was a wild rugged district with a rough population." J.S. Howson.
    - 3. It took a tough man for a tough job in a tough field. Titus was the man chosen.

## III. His Relationship to Paul.

- A. Paul's son in the gospel, Tit. 1:4.
- B. Paul's partner and fellow helper, II Cor. 8:23.
- C. He walked in the same spirit as Paul, II Cor. 12:18.
- D. He was Paul's trouble shooter and special assistant.
- E. He was the apostle's comforter, II Cor. 7:6.

## IV. Rules By Which He Did His Work.

- A. Tit. 2:15.
- B. Tit. 2:7.
- C. II Cor. 8:16-17. He had earnest care for the saints.
- D. He volunteered for difficult tasks.

## V. Lessons to Remember:

- A. A man who has no sons in the gospel has failed to a large degree in his work.
- B. A church that does not produce ministers is in reality a dying church . . . a terminal church.
- C. When a church no longer has anyone willing to go forth with its message, it has no reason to continue to exist.
- D. May we be Christians of the calibre of Titus, dedicated and uncompromising in our work.
- E. May we be a comfort to our fellow workers and not a thorn in their flesh.
- F. What a joy it is when our children in the faith grow to maturity and take their place by our sides as equals.
- G. Let us be problem solvers, not problem makers.

H. God needs tough men to handle the tough jobs of the kingdom.

I. Let us be earnest and affectionate toward brethren as was Titus.

J. May we have that same spirit as Paul . . . as did Titus.

K. To be successful workers for God we must be examples of good works and doctrinal soundness, Tit. 2:7-8.

L. The church in every age needs men gifted in the practical administrative field to lead the church onward.

M. Let us cherish our liberty in Christ and never let any man force his opinions, customs and traditions on us.

## UZZAH, WHOM GOD STRUCK DEAD

### I Sam. 6:6-7

INTRO: God has never tolerated man's disregard of and disobedience to his revealed will. To remind mankind of his holiness and majesty and that no man dare take liberties with things sacred, God makes examples of some offenders. Our subject was such an example of judgment.

**I. The Setting.**

A. The removal of the ark of God from Baal-judah to Jerusalem.

B. The ark had rested in the house of one Abinadab for some 70 years.

1. Abinadab seems to have been a Levite.

2. As his son, Eleazar was sanctified to keep the ark, I Sam. 7: 1.

C. David had recently been crowned king of Israel and had taken Jerusalem. He desired to revive the worship of Jehovah and to give it a central place in his new royal city.

D. Thirty thousand chosen men were assembled to accompany the procession, II Sam. 6: 1.

E. A new cart was prepared to carry the ark.

F. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab were in charge of driving the oxen, II Sam. 6: 3.

G. The occasion was one of great festivity with music and songs, II Sam. 6: 5.

**II. About the Man.**

A. His name Uzzah means strong or strength.

B. His family.

1. His father, Abinadab.
2. His brothers, Eleazar and Ahio.

C. His home, Kiriath-jearim.

1. All of his life the ark of Jehovah had been stored there.

D. There is no evidence that Uzzah was a wicked man. We would assume he was sincere in his service.

**III. The Divine Judgment.**

A. The incident, II Sam. 6: 6-7.

1. They were at the threshing floor of Nacon.
2. The oxen stumbled causing the ark to appear to be falling.

   3. Uzzah took hold of the ark to stabilize it and save it from toppling off.
- B. Instantly, God smote him and he died in his tracks.
- C. The great celebration was brought to a standstill in shocked silence.

## IV. Why Did It Happen?

- A. The first basic error. David did not follow God's regulations for transporting the ark.
  1. Only the priests were allowed to touch the sacred furniture, Num. 4: 15.
  2. The Levites would transport each item on staves upon their shoulders.
     - a. Ex. 25: 14.
     - b. Num. 7: 9.
- B. Instead of transporting the ark as God commanded, they did it like their Philistine neighbors had done, I Sam. 6: 7.
  1. David realized that God was displeased with the whole arrangement, I Chron. 15: 13.
- C. No one but a priest was to touch the ark, no matter what the occasion, Num. 4: 15.
- D. Uzzah violated this regulation.
- E. His punishment was instantaneous.
- F. Neglect of God's ark and the attendent worship for those many years allowed all of them to grow careless in handling the sacred object, I Chron. 13: 3.
- G. Perhaps being continuously around the ark in his home led Uzzah to grow too familiar with this holy item.

H. "Touching the ark, the throne of the divine glory and visible pledge of the invisible presence of the Lord, was a violation of the majesty of the holy God." Kiel and Delitzsch.

**V. Lessons to Remember.**

A. Right things must be done in the right manner or they will not be accepted.

B. Good intentions are not sufficient in God's service. There must be obedience to his will, Matt. 7:21.

C. Great crowds do not ensure a God's approval of blessing on a given project. Thousands were there that day.

1. Matt. 7:13.

D. Enthusiasm is no guarantee of acceptance. They played "with all their might."

E. We must never presume to carry on God's work in a way he has forbidden.

1. Lev. 10:3, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me and before all people will I be glorified."

F. We must have a reverent fear lest we mishandle the things of God, Ps. 2:11.

1. The Lord's supper, I Cor. 11:27-29.
2. The scriptures, II Tim. 2:15.

G. When they sought God but "not according to the ordinance" God made a breach upon them, I Chron. 15:13.

1. When men worship God with mechanical instruments of music they risk his displeasure.
2. Eph. 5:19.

H. Godly fear is a great bridle for intemperance.
    1. Ps. 4:4, "Stand in awe and sin not."

I. No dangers to God's church can warrant an interference which is expressly forbidden, however great the danger or sincere the desire to avert it.

J. Uzzah stands as a reminder to all who with good intentions, yet with unsanctified minds, interfere in the affairs of God's kingdom with the notion that they are saving it from danger.

K. Reasons for divine judgment may not always be apparent to man, yet they are certainly valid.
    1. Gen. 18:25.
    2. As a Hebrew and most likely a Levite it was Uzzah's responsibility to know his duties and limitations.

L. May we never be guilty of unlawfully laying our hand upon any of the sacred ordinances of God as we serve him.

## THE WISE MEN
### Matt. 2:1-12

INTRO: Everyone in the Western world knows the story of the wise men who came to worship the infant Christ. So much tradition has grown up around these noble men that most people cannot distinguish between the true facts of the story and fable.

**I. Who were the wise men?**

A. They were *Magi,* according to the Greek.
    1. Heredotus says they were a priestly caste of ancient Media, numerous enough to be regarded as one of the six tribes of that nation.

    2. They became the priests and instructors of the Medo-Persian world.
        a. No sacrifice could be offered unless one of them was present.
    3. They were skilled in philosophy, medicine and natural science.
    4. They were looked upon as soothsayers and interpreters of dreams.
    5. They were astrologers, students of the stars, believing that the fortunes of men might be read therein.

B. They were commonly found in the royal courts as advisors, Dan. 2:2.

C. Where did they come from?
    1. From the East, Matt. 2:1.
    2. Likely from Babylon which was renowned for its astrology interest.
        a. Also a large body of Jews yet lived there with their Messianic hope and prophecies.
    3. Possibly from Persia, although astrology was not as widely practiced there.

## II. Can Their Number or Names be Known? No!

A. Augustine and Chrysostom said there were twelve of them.

B. Today it is universally believed that three came.
    1. This stems from the three gifts given.

C. The venerable Bede claimed to know their names and appearances.
    1. *Melchior,* an old man with white hair and a long beard. He gave the *gold.*

2. *Caspar,* a ruddy, beardless youth. He brought *frankincense.*
3. *Balthasar* was swarthy, with a close beard and in the prime of life. He brought the *myrrh.*
4. Another tradition says that Melchoir was a Semite, Caspar, Hametic, and Balthasar, a Japhethite.

D. These and all other similar traditions are of no historical value at all. They simply reflect the imposition of human speculation upon the brevity of the sacred record.

## III. Why Did They Come?

A. They travelled some 650 miles if they came from Babylon.

B. They "saw his star." Matt. 2:2.

1. Such men devoted themselves to the study of the stars.
2. They kept extensive and accurate records of the movements of the heavenly bodies.
3. These ancient records are of value even today.

C. Was this a natural phenomenon in the heaven?

1. The great astronomer Johannes Kepler in the 17th Century discovered that indeed a strange astronomical event took place about that time.
   - a. A conjunction of the planets *Jupiter* and *Saturn* occured and that the planet *Mars* also joined them, flooding the heavens with their threefold brilliant light.
   - b. This occured in 6 B.C. It happens only once in 794 years.

2. The star of Matthew's account does not seem to fit the record of Kepler.
    a. This star seems to have appeared, then vanished, then appeared again, Matt. 2: 2, 9.
    b. This star moved along before them, leading the way. This a natural star never does.
    c. It then stood over the place where the child lay, Matt. 2: 9. A natural star would not give this specific appearance.
    d. It was most likely a special, miraculous guide provided by God to bring them to his Son.

D. The World-wide Rumor.

1. *Suetonius.* "There had spread over all the Orient an old and established belief, that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judea to rule the world." *Life of Vespasian.*
2. *Tacitus* said: "There was a firm persuasion . . . that at this very time the East was to grow powerful, and rulers coming from Judea were to acquire universal empire." *Histories.*
3. *Josephus:* The Jews had the belief that "about that time one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth." *Wars of the Jews.*
4. *Balaam's* prophecy recorded by Moses was carried by the Jews of the Dispensation.
    a. "There shall come forth a star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel." Num. 24: 17.

## IV. When Did They Come?

A. Not at the time of the birth, but at least 40 days later.
   1. Notice they found him in a house, not in the manger, Matt. 2:11.

B. *Forty days* after his birth his parents took him to the temple where Mary offered her sacrifices for purification and presented the child to the Lord.
   1. Lk. 2:22-24.
   2. Lev. 12:2-4.

C. As soon as the "Magi" left, the holy family fled to Egypt.

D. They came in the year 5 or 4 B.C.
   1. Our calendar originated with Dionysius Exiguus, a Roman Catholic abbot who died in 556 A.D.
   2. Dionysius mistakenly set the year of Christ's birth in the 754th year of Rome.
   3. Josephus tells us that Herod the Great died about April 1, in the 750th year of Rome, or 4 B.C. by our calendar.
   4. Since Jesus was born while Herod was yet alive, he must have been born in 5 or 4 B.C.
   5. Our calendar is in reality about 4 years behind.

## V. What Did These Wise Men do?

A. They made a costly, dangerous, lengthy journey seeking for God's Messiah, Matt. 16:24.

B. They searched and asked for further information. They were not easily discouraged, Matt. 7:7.

C. They found the object of their search, John 7: 17.

D. They worshipped the newborn king, Matt. 2: 11.
   1. The humble circumstances of the babe did not discourage them.
   2. Though they were Gentiles and he a Jew, it did not discourage them.
   3. We do not read that they gave gifts to the mighty Herod.

E. They gave him gifts.
   1. Eastern monarchs are always approached with a gift.
   2. The gifts have a significance.
      a. Gold was the special and appropriate gift for a king.
      b. Frankincense was the most suitable gift for a priest for it was a sweet incense used in sacrifice.
      c. Myrrh was the gift for one who was to die, for it was used to prepare the body for burial.

F. They obeyed God's instruction to not tell Herod, Matt. 2: 12.

**VI. Lessons to Remember:**

A. May we be wise like them in seeking the Savior.

B. May we be willing to pay the price they paid to find the Lord.

C. Let us be wise in following the Light which God has provided.

D. Never be content to let others do your searching for you.

E. They were wise in worshipping the Christ rather than his mother, Mary.

F. They gave Jesus their finest gifts. May we do no less, beginning with our very lives, Rom. 12: 1-2.

G. They showed great wisdom in obeying God. So should we. Matt. 7: 21.

H. Those who live furthest from Zion are often the earliest and most punctual in being there.

I. May we never allow the uninspired traditions of men to overcloud the simple history of the sacred record.

J. Let us always be content with the pure Christianity of the Bible and never take up the unauthorized practices of men such as a Christmas holy day.

K. Remember the scriptures will make us wise unto salvation, II Tim. 3: 15.

L. A wise men will redeem the time, Eph. 5: 15.

M. Let us be like another wise man who built his house on the solid rock of obedience to God. Matt. 7: 24.

## THE WOMAN WHO TOUCHED JESUS' GARMENT

### Mk. 5:21-34

INTRO: Jesus was on his way to the home of Jairus whose daughter lay at the point of death. As he walked through the town with Jairus a large noisy crowd thronged about him. In that crowd, retiring and making herself obscure, was the subject of our study.

**I. About the Woman.**

- A. She was likely a younger woman since he called her "daughter."
- B. Her infirmity:
    - 1. An issue of blood, hemorrhage.
    - 2. She was a victim of chronic disability, nervous exhaustion, lingering and increasing loss of vitality.
- C. It had been in progress 12 long years.
    - 1. Each day her very life was ebbing away, she was slowly dying.
- D. Her fruitless search, Mk. 5:25-26.
    - 1. She "had suffered many things of many physicians."
        - a. Some ancient cures of "women's" blood problems: "Carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen rag in the summer, in a cotton rag in the winter."
        - b. "Dig seven ditches, burn shoots of grape vines therein and let her drink wine by each ditch."
        - c. "Set the patient where two roads meet and put a glass of wine in her hand, then let someone slip up from behind and frighten her."
        - d. ". . . the best among physicians is destined for Gehenna. . . ." Rabbi Joseph.
    - 2. She had spent all that she had.
        - a. Such remedies made none better, except the physician.

        - b. She was spent both physically and mentally as well as materially.
    3. She was none bettered.
    4. She rather grew worse.
    5. Even Luke the physician admitted that she could not be helped by doctors, Lk. 8:43.

E. The restrictions her sickness imposed.
    1. Her condition would have made her ceremonially unclean, Lev. 15:25-27.
    2. She was forbidden to enter the temple or synagogue.
    3. She was unable to do the duties and enjoy the privileges of a wife with her husband.
    4. She would be ostracized as unclean by her fellow men.
    5. She had lived in appalling loneliness for 12 years.
    6. Think of all the joys you have had, the things you have done, and the places you have been, in 12 years.
    7. In touching him, she broke both religious and social rules which forbade such.

F. Her timidity:
    1. She was a poor shrinking creature, broken down by long illness.
    2. She was depressed by the poverty which her sickness had brought upon her and her repeated disappointments from the physicians.
    3. Womanly diffidence, low social standing, religious and social barriers concerning women

    and her special disease made her wish to hide herself.
  4. Had people recognized her they would have driven her out.
  5. She was strictly forbidden to touch any priest.
- G. Her faith.
  1. It was great need that brought her to Christ.
  2. In sheer despair she resolved to try Jesus, all else had failed.
  3. Her faith was real, but imperfect.
     - a. She had a deep desire to be healed.
     - b. She had strong conviction that Jesus could heal her.
     - c. She had great expectation and hope that it would happen.
  4. It was not perfect faith, but a perfect savior that healed her.

**II. The Lord Who Healed Her.**

- A. His primary mission on earth was to save lost souls from sin, Lk. 19:10.
- B. Yet he took time to minister to suffering humanity's needs.
  1. Christ knew that you can often save a man's soul if you can save his life.
  2. He was never too busy to do a good deed for someone.
- C. See his great, unlimited power to heal.
  1. He had the Holy Spirit without measure, John 3:34.

2. All power in heaven and earth was his, Matt. 28: 18.
3. Truly he was the great physician.

D. Note his sensitiveness.
  1. Not the smallest matter escaped his attention. He was omniscient.
  2. The sensitivity of his uncorrupted body told Jesus he had given something of his boundless life.
  3. See his instant response to human need whether moral, spiritual or physical.
  4. It is impossible for anyone to need him without his knowledge, Matt. 10: 29-30.

E. Notice his calmness in the face of the many pressures and demands made upon him.
  1. Though he was on a life saving mission, he could pause to help an afflicted soul.

F. His tenderness.
  1. He did not demand that she reveal the nature of her illness.
  2. He called her "daughter", an endearing term of affection.
  3. He allayed her fears. "Be of good cheer," Matt. 9: 22.

G. His garment.
  1. A square outer cloak, with a blue border and a tassel at each corner, Num. 15: 38-40.
  2. It reminded them of their covenant duties.
  3. The garment was important only because of its relationship to Jesus.

4. Her faith not her finger and Jesus' power not his garment made her whole.

## III. The Miracle:

- A. Notice that she was healed instantly.
- B. She did not have to pay for her blessing.
- C. It was the kind of miracle that could be verified.
- D. This genuine miracle of healing is totally different from alleged cures of faith healers of today.
- E. Miracles had three purposes.
  1. To accredit Christ's claims to Deity, John 5:36-37.
  2. To generate faith in the hearts of the people who observed them, John 20:30-31.
  3. To relieve suffering, Mk. 1:40-42.

## IV. Her Confession, Lk. 8:45-48.

- A. He did not ask the question for his own information.
- B. She needed to know it was Christ, not the garment, that healed her.
- C. She needed to publicly confess him:
  1. That men could know what Christ had done for her.
  2. To provide a good example of other sinners.
  3. To strengthen the faith of his disciples.
  4. To deliver herself from that unnecessary shame which would have kept her from enjoying her new-found deliverance and acknowledging her Savior.
- D. Christ could not let her go with only her body healed and her spirit yet infirm.

    1. She confessed before men, Matt. 10: 32.
    2. She likely received a double blessing that day.

**V. Lessons to Remember:**

- A. Suffering and pain bring people to God as nothing else does.
- B. Little trials of life make some people accuse heaven, but great sorrow and pain humble us before God.
- C. This poor woman is a looking glass in which we may all see ourselves.
    1. We are all plagued with a terrible incurable sickness (sin) that is wasting our lives and sapping our strength.
    2. All of our efforts and worldly physicians and their cures can never avail.
    3. In fact, they will but make us worse.
    4. But if we can but touch the hem of his garment we shall be made whole.
- D. She had resolved not to die if a cure could be found, so should we be determined about salvation, John 7: 17.
- E. Bodily presence near Jesus was not enough. Faith and action made her whole.
    1. Two kinds of people touched Jesus that day: curious onlookers pressed close to see, but only this woman touched him and was healed.
- F. Faith is the hand which receives the blessing.
    1. Faith is nothing in itself, it heals-saves only when it brings us into contact with Christ.
    2. Faith may begin because it desires a blessing

    but to be mature faith it must desire Christ above all other blessings.

    3. We are impressed by her faith, but more so with Jesus' faith in her. He always believed in the possibility of men changing and rising to a higher plane.

G. Like his garment, baptism and the church are only important because of their relation to Christ.

H. The world is full of religious doctors who drain away the wealth of their patients with no benefit at all to their souls.

I. Those who would help men today need the sensitiveness and tenderness of Jesus.

J. Like that woman, we need to openly declare what the Lord has done for us.

    1. "Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so." Ps. 107:2.

CONCLUSION: Do not be afraid to reach out and touch the Lord. Do not be afraid because of your ignorance or poverty. Do not be afraid to tell him all your pain, suffering and sorrow. Fear but one thing, .i.e, that he pass by your life and you do not reach out and take hold of the healer of souls. A fleeting touch healed her body but it will take a lifetime of clinging to his great hand to save the soul in heaven. Will you not confess the Savior today? It's never hard to confess to one who understands us like our Jesus.

# ZACCHAEUS

## The Unlikely Prospect

## Lk. 19:1-10

INTRO: The sacred writer Luke delights to emphasize that Jesus was the friend of the social outcasts. The subject of our study was a most unlikely prospect for conversion, yet Luke shows us how he was won to the Savior.

**I. About the Man.**

A. All we know of the man is in our text.

B. His name was the Greek form of Zaccai which meant "pure."

C. His physique — "little of stature."

D. His home — Jericho.

1. A major city on a main caravan route.
2. On the Jordan River at a major fording place.
3. Situated in a very fertile valley.
4. Renowned for her palm forests, balsam groves and rose gardens.
5. Called the City of Palms.
6. A residence of kings.
7. A major tax collection center.

E. His profession — Chief Publican, 19:2.

1. Publicans were tax collectors for the Romans.
2. Contracts were farmed out to collectors.
3. Being a "chief publican" he would have been the senior officer in the customs house at Jericho.
4. The job offered much wealth to its holder.

F. His Financial Standing — "He was rich."

    1. Only a tiny handful were rich in those days. There was no middle class, the rest were poor.

G. His social standing.

    1. Publicans were considered turncoats and traitors by the Jewish people.
    2. It was thought that only the lowest scum of society would thus work for the Romans, collecting taxes from Hebrews.
    3. They were stigmatized and shunned by all.
    4. They were denied all social and religious intercourse.
    5. They were commonly insulted by the Pharisees.
    6. Since so many of them were dishonest, it was assumed they all were.

H. His personal life.

    1. He would have been alienated.
    2. Lonely.
    3. Unhappy.

I. Major handicaps stood between Zacchaeus and Jesus.

    1. His job. He could have had very little religion and no patriotism.
    2. His wealth. It is hard for a rich man to enter . . . heaven. Matt. 19:23.
    3. His social standing.
    4. His size. He could not even see over or through the crowd.

J. He needed a savior.

    1. His money, position, success, wisdom, and health could not save his soul or make him happy.

**II. The Occasion, 19:3-5a.**

- A. It was the last week of Jesus' personal ministry.
- B. He was on his way to Jerusalem to face certain death at the hands of the Jewish leaders.
- C. The twelve apostles were travelling with him.
- D. They were making their journey by foot over the long dusty road.
- E. Just as he approached the east gates of the city, Christ had healed blind Bartimaeus causing a great stir and attracting a noisy crowd.
- F. Zacchaeus heard the commotion and rushed out to catch a glimpse of the prophet.
- G. Because of his shortness he could not see a thing.
- H. He pushed through the crowd and ran ahead to a sycamore tree which he climbed to get a better view.
    1. The sycamore of our text is the mulberry fig.
    2. It has a short trunk and wide lateral branches.
- I. To the shock and surprise of all, Jesus not only took note of this little outcast, but called him down by name.

**III. The Uninvited Guest, 19:5b-7.**

- A. The last things Zacchaeus expected happened that day.
    1. Jesus took notice of him.
    2. Jesus knew his name and spoke to him, a publican, publicly.

    3. Jesus invited himself into his home.

B. No respectable Jewish rabbi would have done what Jesus did: perhaps an insult, but never a social visit.

C. He had cast aside dignity that day by scurrying up the tree to see Jesus, now he was being honored a thousand times over.

D. Although Jesus invited himself in, Zacchaeus still had to accept or reject the offer.

E. He did not know it, but Zacchaeus had only this one chance to share his home with Jesus; for within one week he would be crucified.

F. Jesus again showed himself to be the friend of publicans and sinners. Matt. 11: 19.

G. The reaction of the crowd — they murmured.
    1. How could Jesus pick such a home to rest in?
    2. See Lk. 5: 29-32.

H. Zacchaeus made haste and received him joyfully.
    1. No doubt he offered Jesus the very best hospitality he could.
    2. Surely he would have had much to talk about with Matthew, himself formerly a publican.

## IV. The Unexpected Results.

A. He had at first been drawn to see Christ out of curiosity, an imperfect motive.

B. So contrary to the social conventions of the day were these events, he probably never dreamed such an opportunity would be his.

C. When Jesus comes into any person's life, that life is touched in a way that lasts forever . . . for weal or woe.

D. He was saved that day.
   1. No details of the teaching done or the obedience rendered are given.
   2. We know that Jesus taught the Jews to be baptized, John 4: 1-2. Also faith and repentence were required, John 8: 24, Lk. 13: 3.
   3. Zacchaeus was justified, redeemed, cleansed, forgiven; he became a child of God, a disciple.
   4. Although we have no details as to what Zacchaeus did, we are plainly told what to do to be saved. Mk. 16: 16.

### V. Zacchaeus Demonstrated His Salvation by a Changed Heart and Life, Lk. 19:8.

A. See his liberality.

B. Note his restitution, Ezek. 33: 15.

C. Loving obedience, John 14: 15; Heb. 5: 8-9.

### VI. The Moral Lesson of the Story, Lk. 19:10.

A. Jesus came to save all the people of the world including those like Zacchaeus.

B. That today is the paramount purpose of the church.

### VII. Lessons to Remember:

A. We need to have that simplicity and child-like curiosity of Zacchaeus if we would be saved. Matt. 18: 3.

B. A person might be won to Christ even though his first motive was not the noblest.

C. Zacchaeus had prosperity but it could not satisfy the needs of his soul. Matt. 4:4.

D. Never be ashamed to be *undignified* in pursuing aims you know to be right and good. He climbed that tree no matter what the neighbors thought. Some of us are too starched for that.

E. Jesus was forever seeing those which others passed by. Only those who share the passion of Jesus possess this vision.

F. There are thousands of souls today like Zacchaeus, up all kinds of trees, trying to see Jesus. Like him, they must come down and learn to do his will.

G. There are some trades and professions which carry their own stigma. The very word publican was a symbol of everything bad.

H. As Jesus dared to cross social barriers for souls so must we.

I. When the church cannot bring itself to go into the homes of the outcasts and the poor, it has disassociated itself with Jesus.

J. Although Jesus was able and willing to do great things for Zacchaeus, he began by asking a favor of him.

K. As Zacchaeus had but one chance to let Christ come into his life (the next week Jesus died) so we may have only this one opportunity to let him in.

L. Like Zacchaeus, we must open the door and let Jesus in, Rev. 3:20.

M. Zacchaeus began the day by wanting to see what kind of man Jesus was. It ended with him seeing the kind of person he himself really was.

N. Confronted by the holiness of Christ, Zacchaeus looked into that heavenly mirror and did not like what he saw.

O. When Jesus comes into a man's life in any way, that life is touched in a way that will change it ever after for good or bad.

P. A day that brings salvation to a man has brought him everything a day can bring.

Q. We see the importance of restitution in true conversion.

R. Remember that a sure evidence of a man's conversion is his attitude towards money and wealth.

S. Like a lost child, like people who have missed their way and are bewildered as to direction, so sinners are lost to God.